AT GRIPS WITH THE TURK

McGhee
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CAPTAIN BRE[illegible]TON


Sultan Mehmed II, the Conqueror
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George Crews McGhee
United States Ambassador
to Turkey

From Uncle David

To David.

Xmas 1931.

At Grips with the Turk

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At Grips with the Turk

A Story of the Dardanelles Campaign in the Great War

BY

LT.-COL. F. S. BRERETON

Author of "Under French's Command"
"With French at the Front"
"Indian and Scout"
&c. &c.

Illustrated by Wal Paget

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By Lt.-Col. F. S. Brereton

With French at the Front.
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One of the Fighting Scouts.
A Knight of St. John.
Roger the Bold.
Rough Riders of the Pampas.
Indian and Scout.
The Great Aeroplane.
Tom Stapleton.
A Boy of the Dominion.

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AT GRIPS WITH THE TURK

CHAPTER I

Mr. Midshipman Smallweed

TOM GALLON braced his shoulders, drew himself up to his full height, and set himself square on his feet.

"'Shun!" he roared at the top of his voice—a voice like a fog-horn, deep and hoarse and penetrating; so hoarse, in fact, that one might well imagine he had been shouting orders for days past. "'Shun!" he roared again, and cast a swift glance over his shoulder at the group of men immediately behind him. Then the gallant Tom indulged in a magnificent salute as the Hon. Dereck Smallweed swaggered by.

"Yus, one of us, eh?" whispered Jack Barnsby of the squad, simple A.B., on fatigue duty ashore from His Majesty's light cruiser *Achilles*, then lying in the outer roads leading to the entrance of the Suez Canal. "One of ours. Jest a sorter chip o' the old block, eh?" he asked, *sotto voce*, of his immediate neighbour, nudging him somewhat violently in the

ribs and winking a wink which one could have observed from almost a mile away. Tom Gallon seemed even to feel that wink.

"Stop talkin' there!" he roared, swinging round for a moment—and then he smiled, smiled because a man couldn't help smiling when he caught a glimpse of Jack Barnsby's round and jovial face; and also because the appearance of the Hon. Dereck Smallweed was sufficient to wreathe the face of any sailor. For Dereck was the latest-joined midshipman, a "snottie" after the heart of any sailor, and one particularly to the fancy of the men of the *Achilles*.

"Jest like his pa, eh?" whispered the incorrigible Jack, not in the least perturbed by the fierce look with which the honest Tom had attempted to favour him, a glance which lost its ferocity in an instant and broadened into a smile. "Ah, 'stand easy'. That's more to a man's liking. 'Break ranks.' That's a sight better. Now, as I was a-sayin', 'e's like his dear pa, 'e is, that there young snottie, as like the Admiral as ever was, back ways and front ways, abeam and fore and aft, as you might say. 'E's got the swagger of a Chief Lord, 'e 'as, and he ain't afraid of no one. 'E's the boy fer the navy."

"And'll make things hum, that he will," the gallant Tom burst in, joining eagerly in the conversation now that discipline was relaxed and the subject of their conversation had passed by. "Mind the time, Jack, when we was aboard that old tub of a '*Ector*, and that snottie's pa was in command? We was cruisin' down along the west coast of Africa."

"You bet yer eye! A sort of a 'ole of Calcutta,"

the smiling Jack assured him, as he plugged his pipe with tobacco. "A low-lyin' land to larboard, a 'eavin', swellin' oily sea all round, and if you was in port for a while, why, just 'eat and niggers. Yus, 'is pa was there with you and me."

"And wasn't 'e a 'ot 'un on them slavers? What?" demanded the gallant Tom, while the group of fatigue men, all younger sailors, hovered about the pair and listened eagerly. For Tom and Jack were characters aboard the *Achilles*, old sailors who had seen a deal of service, and moreover jovial fellows who, when there was no need for discipline, could be as jolly with their fellows as any.

As to the subject of their conversation, to wit the Hon. Dereck Smallweed, that young gentleman had swept on to the quay-side with a lofty air which might have given the impression that he was "sidy", was full of conceit, was one of the very few who looked upon simple A.B.'s as beneath his notice. For Dereck had undoubtedly a swagger. The tilt to his cap, the cut of his duck clothing, the rakish rig of his belt and side-arm made him at once a smart and dashing officer. And then he had the airs and manners of a senior.

"Just like 'is pa," said the worthy Jack, lighting his fill of tobacco. "That there snottie'll go a long way, 'e will, you mark my words, 'cos 'e's as like the Admiral as one pea's like to another; and if you was just to dress 'im up in the proper uniform, and fix 'im with a bit of a beard, why, there you've got 'im: Admiral Lord Andus Smallweed, K.C.B., M.V.O., and all the rest o' the letters, 'im to a T. Yus, sir!"

The honest Jack could spring to attention with any-

one, and the sharp, peremptory tones of the Hon. Dereck failed to surprise him. "Yus, sir!" he answered crisply as he heard the officer summon him.

"Er—er, you'll see my servant probably in the next ten minutes," the lordly Dereck told him, as he flicked the dust from his immaculate brown shoes with a silk handkerchief.

"Certainly, sir."

"And, er—if you do you'll just give him a message from me. Tell him I've hired that old tub of a native boat we were looking at this morning, and that he's to get my togs aboard and buy provisions sufficient for a party of four. Tell him I've got leave, and that he won't be wanted to come with me, and—er——"

"Quite so, sir. Kit to be put aboard and provisions bought. Singleton won't be wanted. And——"

"Oh, yes, and let him see that there are smokes aboard and a few bottles of beer. The other fellows'll like it. Don't forget, please, as it's important."

Dereck swung round magnificently and boarded the boat which had now come alongside the quay, while the honest Jack stood saluting. He was winking as the boat pushed off, winking and grinning at Tom, while smiles wreathed the faces of the other sailors. For here was another piece of the Hon. Dereck's magnificence, of his grown-upness.

"Smokes and bottled beer! Oh!" gasped Tom. "'E do do things in style, does Mr. Smallweed. And I'll tell you: this 'ere trip in a old tub of a native boat—well, I'd give a heap to be along with them. There'll be fun, you may guess, and—and who's the rest of the tea-party?"

Jack drew his pipe from between the two blackened teeth which usually gripped the stem, and which were worn into a nicely convenient hollow, and blew a cloud of smoke into the bowl. He watched it curling about him meditatively, and coughed a cough which would have awakened the dead.

"'Oo's a-goin' with 'im? Ah, that's it!" he said stolidly. "And you're right in guessin' that the trip'll be worth doin'. Well, I can tell you something. Young Dereck and the others'll make a party that'll make things 'um. 'Cos 'e's got two cousins aboard that ship out there, two what's come over from Australia and 'as gone aboard to make a call—two sparks they are, orfficers with them Colonials that's come to watch the Canal and give them Turks what for when they come along to see what's doing. Simpkins—Private Simpkins, that is—who's servant to one of 'em and is just a ordinary 'Tommy' (and it ain't 'is fault that 'e ain't a sailor)—well, Simpkins tells me as them two young cocks from Australia is cousins too, and is both Smallweeds, only one of 'em don't come quite from Australia, but from New Zealand. 'E says—and you may lay it that 'e knows—'e says as them two young orfficers is the larkiest as ever 'e set eyes on, and is the constant trouble and vexation of their superior orfficers. Simpkins is a man as I've got a respect for, although he is a soldier—and that's a thing 'e can't easily change now, seein' that he's been a soldier for ten years past, and it's too late to think of switchin' off to bein' a sailor—'e says that them two is just dare-devils, and up to any bit of a lark, though they've got the airs and the manners of a duke, just like our own

Dereck. Well, if them three gets together in a old tub of a native boat there'll be somethin' doin', specially when you comes to remember the smokes and beer they're orderin'. Watch that there Honourable Dereck climb aboard!"

It was a masterpiece indeed. Dereck gave his orders short and sharp, as the boat's crew took him alongside the liner anchored near the mouth of the Canal, and stepped upon the gangway ladder as if he were the commander of the ship.

"Just lay off there for a while," he told the petty officer in charge. "You can let the men smoke, and —and—er—I'll be leaving the ship in a matter of half an hour."

Then with a light springy step he went up the ladder and gained the deck. As he did so an elderly man came forward smiling and with extended hand, while two young fellows came hurrying towards them from the distance. Then for the space of a minute the four looked closely at one another, while Dereck exchanged the most hearty hand-shake with each of the others in turn.

"And to think it's you, Dereck, the lad I last saw five years ago! Well, I never did!" exclaimed Mr. Peter Smallweed, pushing Dereck to a distance, and surveying him from head to foot. "You haven't changed. You look as great a rascal as ever."

"Thank ye, sir," replied the imperturbable midshipman.

"But you've grown. You're a man now, a young man. Ah, you're lucky!"

Mr. Peter Smallweed actually sighed. He couldn't

help it, and, indeed, had every reason; for excessive youth, which at one time seemed such a hindrance to him, such an annoying possession, had gone now many years ago, and in place of being slim and lithe and active, like the smiling Dereck, his nephew, he was stout and grey, given to shortness of breath when attempting unusual exertion, and satisfied with a life of more or less ease which would, in those earlier days, have bored him intolerably.

"You're lucky, Dereck," he repeated with emphasis. "Lucky to be young, for the day has come for young men. I wish I were one, for then I'd be off soldiering with all the other fellows, soldiering for King and country. As it is, why, I'll have to get back to Australia, and wait and hope for the end of the war and for the smashing of Britain's enemies. So you're a full-fledged naval officer? Congratulations!"

"Thank ye, sir," said Dereck, winking at his cousins.

"And you like the Service?"

"Ripping!"

"And wouldn't have preferred the life of a soldier?"

"Navy's good enough for me, sir," laughed the incorrigible midshipman. "Never did fancy the army. Rather sorry for Claude and Hal. But then, of course, they couldn't well help it."

There were scowls on the faces of his two cousins, scowls smoothed away by rippling laughter. For Dereck was joking, was brim-full of fun and mischief, and, withal, was known to the two young fellows who had returned his winks as a most excellent comrade.

"Couldn't help it, eh?" demanded one of them,

with simulated anger. "See here, young Dereck, I'll punch your head if——"

Mr. Midshipman Smallweed arrested a further flow of threats by magnificently lifting a warning finger.

"If you please, Mr. Smallweed," he said coolly, and his face was almost stern; "if you please," he repeated, with a deal of emphasis, cocking his cap at a more rakish angle, "I have to remind you that I belong to the senior service, and that my commission is dated prior to yours."

Then he broke down and grinned, while Claude, to whom he addressed the little speech, shook a huge, bony fist in his face and gripped him by the shoulder. Claude was immense when compared with the snottie, though the Hon. Dereck was of no mean height, and certainly broad and not mean-looking. But Claude was a giant, a young man of twenty-one, perhaps, broad and tall and lithe and active—the sort of young fellow who made you look twice at him, whose tanned features attracted your attention, whose figure you admired, and in whose clean-cut face and general appearance you recognized in a flash that something which stamps the Britisher the world over.

Fair as a flower, but for the deep tan on his face and arms and hands, by no means ill-favoured, Claude looked a soldier every inch of him, from his thick, serviceable boots and putties to the wideawake hat protecting his well-poised head. The khaki shirt, with sleeves rolled to the elbow, was filled by a chest which gave promise of still further expansion, and which the recruiting officer's tape measure over in Brisbane had demonstrated to measure exactly forty-

four inches. For the rest, his baggy shorts, his bare and tanned knees, the belt about his slim waist and the revolver thrust in the pouch attached thereto gave him a very workmanlike appearance, the aspect of a soldier, a soldier every inch of him, an officer and a gentleman. And from the depths of his steady blue eyes there shone a light which spoke of courage, of firmness of purpose, of a good heart beating beneath a manful breast.

"Superior officer, eh?" he demanded, gripping the Hon. Dereck till the middy almost squirmed. "Commission antedated, eh? By just about two seconds, my boy, two little seconds, which ain't enough to make you crow over us. Just you mind what you're doing then. But I'm ready for a compact. Listen to this, Hal, and remember, for there's never any saying when Dereck won't be getting uppish. Ashore we're cock of the walk and he's under orders. Afloat——"

"Pooh!" burst in the incorrigible Dereck, not in the least upset by his cousin's show of violence. "Afloat you land-lubbers'll be sick."

"Afloat," said Claude, gripping the middy's arm a little tighter, till the Hon. Dereck's face twisted, "afloat, my dear, delightful cousin, you will be supreme. It's your job. We hand it over to you."

"Good! Then let's talk of the trip ahead. I've hired that old tub we looked at this morning and have got leave."

"Leave!" exclaimed Mr. Smallweed. "Thought that was all ended in these times of war."

"So did the Commander, sir," grinned Dereck. "But exceptional circumstances bring exceptional

privileges. I don't see an uncle from Australia every day of the year. It ain't often that we meet in the Suez Canal, and there's no saying what's going to happen. So the Commander gave way. I've got leave. I've hired the boat, and Singleton's got orders to provision her. If Claude and Hal ain't afraid we'll be off for a trip along the coast, to see what's doing."

The eagerness displayed on the faces of the two young fellows in question was apparent, while their delighted grins showed how they appreciated their cousin's cheek in obtaining leave for the occasion. Nor was it long before they bade farewell to Mr. Smallweed and departed, Hal bidding his father good-bye with a firm shake of the hand and a merry smile.

"Boat ahoy!" shouted Dereck in his own inimitable manner. "Now, climb in, Hal and Claude, and don't be clumsy. Trim her, boys! Push off there. So long, sir! See you next time we're out Australia way."

They waved to the elder gentleman, who looked down at them from the rail of the ship, and then shot off across the water, leaving Mr. Smallweed not a little disconsolate—a little anxious too, let us add, and more than envious of their youth and good fortune.

"If only a man didn't get too old for such work as is before us!" he muttered as he paced the deck. "If only this war had come when one was fit for soldiering! But—but the boys can be trusted to see to it, the boys of the Empire, gathered from every colony, from the farthest quarters, from every town and hamlet in the old country. Bah!"

He was almost savage, and bit off the end of his cigar with a snap which was unusually venomous.

For, to tell the truth, Mr. Peter Smallweed was a disappointed man at this particular period, though a more cheery fellow could not have been discovered on ordinary occasions. In those younger days to which he had referred, he and another of the younger sons of the ancient family of Smallweed had made their way to Australasian waters, there to seek their fortunes, and had settled, the one in Australia and the other in New Zealand. It was characteristic of them, as it is of all who leave the old country, that a trip "home" had been the summit of their earlier ambitions, while always they had kept themselves in close touch with friends and relatives. And now, after thirty years of colonial life, after many a trip "home", there were none more loyal to King George V, none more proud of the British Empire than Mr. Smallweed and his brother, at this moment in New Zealand. It followed as a natural course that the war cloud which had burst over Europe, which had seized Great Britain in its grip, and which had seen the Kaiser and his hosts let loose in all directions, had sent the call to the very heart of Mr. Smallweed and his colonial comrades. But times had changed, and he was past fifty-five years of age.

"But there's Hal—Hal to do the work for both of us. Like to go, boy?" he had asked his son.

"Joined already, Father. So's Claude."

That was how it had all happened, that was how it fell out that Hal and Claude had accompanied the Australian and New Zealand contingents to Egypt, there to make ready to meet the Turk, now joined in with Germany and Austria. As for Dereck, the son

of the eldest brother of three Smallweeds of the older generation, he had done a couple of terms at Dartmouth, had fretted and fumed at the Admiralty's delay in making use of the valuable services of the Hon. Dereck, and had finally shouted with delight when he discovered that he was already gazetted. The remainder was a mere matter of chance and of circumstance. The *Achilles* had steamed off from Portsmouth into the unknown. She had sailed under sealed orders, and had narrowly escaped a German submarine. But she had "made" the Mediterranean in safety, and had in due course dropped her anchor in the muddy depths outside the Canal.

"The most monotonous place that ever existed," Dereck told his cousins as the boat took them to the quay. "Up oars there! Pull her in closer, please. These officers might get tumbling into the water. Now——"

"Now we're ashore," Hal told him severely, "and if ever again you dare to suggest to your sailors that Claude and I want special protection we'll—we'll just roast you. Where's this tub of a native craft? And where are we going? Besides——"

"What about grub?" asked the huge Claude with some anxiety.

"Fixed that all up, my boys. Gave Singleton his orders. Least, I sent 'em to him. Hi, there!"

"Yus, sir!" It was the beefy Jack, a quid in his cheek, his shoulders set as square as a table.

"You saw my servant, Singleton?" asked the lordly Dereck.

"Saw 'im, yus, sir."

"And gave him the orders?"

"Yus, sir. Kit to be put aboard. No need fer his services. Food in plenty, bottled beer for some o' the party, and smokes. It was there that Singleton got puzzled, sir."

"Eh?" demanded Dereck.

"It was like this, sir, begging yer pardon. 'E—that is, Singleton—bein' a bit new to you, sir, didn't quite know what you fancied. 'E'd 'ave gone off and took a roll of plug tobaccer from the ship's canteen if we 'adn't stopped 'im. You'd jest better buy a box of the strongest cigars, we advised, and that's what he's been doing."

Was the stately and staring eye of the gallant Jack actually flickering? Was there just the merest twitch about the corner of his sensitive mouth? Claude looked at the man squarely and coughed. Then he stared hard at Dereck and grinned slyly.

But Mr. Midshipman Smallweed could see a joke with anyone. "Thanks," he told Jack Barnsby curtly. "But—well, I was wondering. Cigars, eh? Rather strong, I fancy, for my cousins. Never mind, however. We'll see Singleton a little later and get 'em changed. Woodbines for you, I fancy, Claude and Hal. Sort of gentle things they smoke in the army."

You could see them half an hour later at the far end of the quay protecting the harbour, Dereck already seated in the native boat and at the tiller, while Claude mounted guard over the stores brought by the faithful Singleton. Hal still stood on the shore unfastening the end of the painter; and sauntering towards them came one destined also to join the party.

"Alphonse Albone," Dereck told his cousins in a whisper. "French, don't you know."

"Sounds like it," Claude told him caustically.

"And soft, soft as butter. Supposing we took him too. It'd do him good. He's just a mother's darling. Hi, Alphonse!" shouted Dereck. "Like a trip? Let me introduce my cousins. Hop aboard, my man, and look slippy. Now, Hal, shove her off. There we go, all lively. Wonder where this trip'll take us?"

Many might have wondered that. Many might have had qualms, knowing something of the carelessness and reckless dash of the middy. But neither Mr. Midshipman Smallweed nor his cousins, nor even the over-cautious Alphonse, the latest recruit to this party, could possibly have guessed what really was in store for them. Perhaps it is a fortunate thing that the future is hidden from us. One may surmise that even had it not been, Dereck and his cousins would have gone gaily on, determined not to be thwarted. But the future was a blank, the trip and their prospects were rosy, and who at the age of these friends of ours cares to bother overmuch about the future?

"Haul on that rope there," commanded the lordly Dereck. "Give a dig with that paddle right for'ard, Hal, and get her nose round. There, she feels it! We'll be on this tack for a while, so shove those togs of ours right down to the bottom."

They were off, and gradually the low-lying entrance to the Canal, with its shipping and its buildings, faded from their view, not to be seen again till Dereck and his friends were considerably wiser.

CHAPTER II

Jack Barnsby joins the Party

"STOP her! What's that? Something or someone in the water."

It was Claude who gave the warning, when he and his friends had been bowling along through the clear, sunlit water for quite a time, and had cut themselves adrift from the shipping in and about the entrance to the Canal. Indeed, they were favoured by a fresh and delightfully cool breeze, which made sailing a glorious pastime. More than that, the novelty of the situation, to be careening there to the wind and pushing a way through that wonderfully blue water, instead of perspiring ashore and being half stifled by sandy dust, was indeed a change after what Hal and Claude at least had experienced for some weeks past. As for Alphonse Albone, no one could say whether he was relieved by the change or otherwise, for Alphonse was the most curiously silent and taciturn fellow that ever existed; that is, as a general rule. He could be lively enough, as gaily French as any Frenchman, when he wished to be. But, in general, he was sad and silent, a namby-pamby fellow, though excellent enough, lean and tall and sallow, delicate in appearance, and seeming to have suffered in his general

health and physique not a little from his lifelong residence in Egypt.

For the rest, he may or may not have been what Dereck had described him, namely, a "mother's darling". His delicate appearance led rather to that unpleasant gibe, his frail figure and retiring ways supported the statement in some measure, while his general want of dash and life gave him the aspect, without a shadow of doubt, of one whose natural liveliness had been suppressed in some way or other, either by individuals or by the unhealthy environment which had perpetually surrounded him. The terrible cut of his clothes, the battered condition of his pith helmet, and the tousled lock of hair which fell over each ear made him anything but smart—the exact opposite, indeed, of the lordly Dereck. Yet he had parts—good parts—which were yet to be demonstrated to his companions. For instance, he could handle a boat, and particularly one of these native craft, with anyone.

"Put your tiller down. No! That's up," he told Dereck, ignoring the grimace with which that young officer at once turned on him. "That's your sort! Now up into the wind with her. Why, it's a man!"

"Sure!" Hal told them, standing up and setting the big boat rocking. "A sailor man!"

"Royal Navy," observed Dereck. "Here's a find! The Admiral will be offering me personal thanks for a gallant rescue. Ahem!"

"You!" shouted Claude. "What in thunder have you to do with the rescue more than we have? Besides, the man isn't rescued yet."

"Ahoy there!" bellowed Dereck, standing up beside Hal with such a jerk that the boat rocked and took in water.

"It's we who will require rescuing soon," said Alphonse. "Sit down. So. Let me take the tiller. Now, there she goes into the wind! Hail again, Dereck."

Claude forestalled the young sailor and sent a roar across the water. Then the quartet watched as the spot they had seen in the water rose a little higher and developed into the head and shoulders of a man, while they clearly heard the answering hail sent toward them.

"Ship ahoy! Heave a rope there! I'm near foundered."

"Told you so. British Navy," said Dereck. "Send the boat along toward him, Alphonse; or, if you can't work it, let me have a go. Hi, there! Coming!"

Once more the ripple of water sounded against the blunt bows of the native boat while they shot along toward the man. Then Alphonse, who had ignored Dereck's words entirely, shot the craft into the wind again, where she rode well within swimming distance of the sailor. As for the latter, it became evident that he was encircled by a life-buoy, and was anything but exhausted. Striking out with lusty strokes he soon swam within touch of the gunwale.

"Lend a hand, mates!" he called huskily. "That's your sort! Ah! Beg pardon, Mr. Smallweed. Come aboard, sir."

It was Jack Barnsby, ruddy of colour, without a doubt, and certainly by no means exhausted. He

stood at attention before the Hon. Dereck, and took careful stock of the other occupants of the boat. Meanwhile his tongue was busy with the quid in his cheek, turning it over and over.

"Of all the surprises! Of all the lucky chances, sir!" he said. "It's a lot I owe to you, Mr. Smallweed, sir, and to these other gentlemen. It's my life, sir. I'm yours gratefully."

"But——"

"How did I come to be in the water, sir? Ah!"

Jack's eyes twinkled. Claude could have sworn that the man was on the point of laughter, and there was something within his knowledge which vastly tickled his fancy. But then, Jack was essentially an old sailor, a man of experience, of cunning if you wish, a reckless fellow with the light heart of a boy and the daring for any adventure.

"It's like this, sir," he said slowly, as if weighing every word. "There was Tom and me and the others ashore on fatigue duty. We'd been landin' stores from one of them lighters lying right out there almost in the offing, and we'd the steam pinnace to haul us. Well, we see you come ashore and make for this boat. Then we steamed off for them lighters. There was just a little job to be done aboard one of 'em, and Tom—him as was skipper of our party—Tom orders me to work it. 'We'll be back afore long,' he says, and with that he steams off to the *Achilles*."

"Yes, and then?" asked Dereck. He was watching the face of the voluble Jack very closely, and he smelt a rat. "You fell into the water?"

"How'd you guess it, sir? That's what happened.

I was leanin' over the side watchin' you gentlemen starting, when——"

"What about the job you were supposed to be working?" asked Dereck severely.

"Ah! It was a small one, Mr. Smallweed—a very small one. I'd got it finished, and but for that there Tom I'd have never come by this here immersion. I was watchin' you young orfficers when over the rail I goes, right into the water. There was a tide runnin' too, and away I goes, with them niggers aboard yellin'. One of 'em had the sense to shy me a buoy, and—and——"

"Here you are, eh?" smiled Dereck.

"Present and correct, sir," laughed the sailor.

"And we're on leave and away for a trip."

"And of course can't be expected to spoil your sport just for a plain sailor. I'm handy-like on these party occasions," Jack told them all, smiling in all directions. "I'm a extry mouth to feed, I know, and a big one at that, sir. But I was specially cautious to tell Singleton to put plenty aboard, so that'll make no great difference. If you're content, sir, and can report what's happened, why, there ain't more to be said, except that I've had luck in fallin' in with this boat and you gentlemen."

"H'm!" Claude sniffed. Hal laughed outright, while the as yet puzzled Dereck swept his hat a little farther backward.

"It's a fine rescue," Claude reminded him. "The Admiral will be obliged to you. No doubt Jack here is of great value. But——"

"For the moment we're on our way, and nothing's

goin' to stop us," Hal told them bluntly. "Shove her into the wind, Alphonse. Glad to see you aboard, my man. You were lucky to time your accident so very nicely."

"Thankee, sir. Same to you. If I was you, Mr. Smallweed, I'd make ready to take a reef in this here leg-o'-mutton sail. They're queer things to handle, and in these parts the wind has a uncomfortable habit of getting up of a sudden. You can see that it's puffy now if you watch the surface of the water. It'll get up and blow your hair wellnigh off in just a few minutes. That is, at some seasons of the year. Then it'll drop just as quickly, as if it had only been out to do you a mischief."

It was wonderful how they all settled down after that long-winded explanation of the gallant Jack. The man busied himself with the huge, woven sail of triangular shape which hung about them, and cast many a quick glance around. Then he sat down on the gunwale, wrung the water out of his clothes, and basked in the warmth of the sun, hoping to get moderately dry before the trip had ended.

"Beggin' pardon, sir," he said after a while, addressing himself to Dereck, as if he must of a certainty be leader of the party, "but——"

"Well, my man?" the lordly middy answered him.

"When a man's been through an immersion and got rescued, there's a sorter reaction and he kind of needs a stimulant. Now, if you wasn't to object to smokin', sir, I'd——"

"Smoking! Of course!" shouted Claude. "There are those cigars. Where are they, Dereck? I'll have

one. We'll all have one, for the matter of that. Hand 'em out, Hal. I can see the box over there in that locker."

For a time then they smoked; Claude with evident enjoyment, Hal with that abstract air which falls upon men who appreciate their surroundings, and Alphonse in silence. Yet he had not lived his life so long in the East without becoming a smoker at rather an early age. He knew a good cigar, too, and certainly admired the one he was then enjoying. As for Dereck, he toyed with the weed. We state plain facts when we admit that the gallant middy was as yet quite a novice. But he had the courage of a lion and that amazing cheek and dash so common to our sailors. He was good for anything, and though he didn't exactly appreciate his cigar as did Claude, yet he made a most excellent pretence to do so. The calmest, the most contented and reflective person amongst them all was Jack, the jovial sailor who had so unexpectedly joined them. He turned his weed over and over, drew in long draughts of smoke, and blew clouds out with obvious reluctance, as if sorry to part with what he had inhaled. And as he smoked he turned his thoughtful eyes from one to another of his companions.

"It was just a good idea o' mine and Tom's," he was reflecting; "just the right sorter idea. I mind the time when I've seen other old sailors sort of nussing snotties, and this here Mister Dereck, he wants a bit o' nussin'. Not as he's soft; but he's reckless, and away in this old tub he was like to get into difficulties. H'm! Like the looks of them young

Colonials. Big 'un'll put up a fight when the time comes. T'other's almost as big and bony. Chips off the old block, you might say."

He took careful stock of Hal for some moments, and indeed had need to do so. For if Claude were a fine specimen of young humanity, Hal was almost equally so. He wasn't quite so tall, nor was his chest measurement quite so enormous. But he was splendidly proportioned, nearly six feet in height, and his hands and feet showed by their size and strength that he would probably develop a little before he had quite ceased growing. Hal, too, had the same clear, steady eye that Claude possessed, and though darker than his cousin had undoubtedly a resemblance to him. You could see it too in Dereck's face. The three profiles were absurdly alike. There was breeding in their faces, in the finely-chiselled features, and in the shapes of their ears and hands. But there the resemblance between Dereck and the others ceased. The gallant middy was shorter than Hal by two inches at least, though of no mean height. He was hardly as well-proportioned, and certainly not so broad nor so sturdy. But his frame was well knit together, and gave him an appearance of being wonderfully active, as indeed he was.

"Three as'll do well in their own ways," Jack reflected, looking critically at his cigar. "I ain't sorry I came, for it'd be a pity if they was to get into trouble. And what's this other young gent? I've seen him about on the quay a-looking to stores and sich things. He'll be about twenty-two years of age, I suppose, and looks thirty. That comes of livin' in a 'ole like Port

Said. Wonder whether he'd turn up trumps or'd be white-livered?"

There was one thing Alphonse could do—do with a vengeance, and Jack could not help but admire him.

"He can handle a boat with anyone; that's something," he told himself. "And he's got a sailor's eye what's castin' about all the time a-lookin' for things that might be happenin'. Seems to me, sir," he said, addressing Alphonse directly, "seems to me as we mightn't be makin' a mistake if we was to take in that reef at once. Beggin' pardon, Mr. Smallweed! Being a orfficer of the Royal Navy you'll be in command here. I should say as you'd be wise if you was to give orders. There's clouds a-comin' up, and clouds in these parts is more treacherous than niggers."

A glance round the horizon was sufficient to confirm the truth of what Jack had stated, for dark clouds were rolling up from the west, though the sun still burned brightly above them, and indeed, but for the cool, strong breeze which was blowing, and for their movement through the water, would have been uncomfortably hot. As for Port Said and its Canal and buildings, they were almost invisible now. The low sand-flats about the entrance to the great Canal had entirely disappeared, and a heat haze hung over the part where buildings existed. Here and there a dull shape told them that a ship lay at anchor, though only a portion of the hull was visible.

"If I was axed I should say, sir, as it might be wise to turn tail and run for the entrance of the Canal,"

said Jack, after a while, when he had dexterously taken in a reef and made all shipshape. "There's squalls coming up, and these here tubs ain't over-handy when it's blowin'."

"What? Funk it! Spoil our trip! I say!" declared Dereck indignantly. "Who cares for a blow? But we don't want to do anything that's stupid. Supposing we set to and have a feed. Eh, Claude? Then, if it still looks like blowing we'll go about. I ain't anxious to get back to Port Said this side of midnight. My leave doesn't end till to-morrow afternoon, and I'm out to make the most of it."

"Then food has it," said the light-hearted Claude. "If by the time we've finished it's getting blowy, why, we'll take Jack's advice. If not, I vote we steam ahead and see what's doing down that long coast, where the Turks are said to be advancing. Supposing we ran into some of 'em! Here have we New Zealanders been waitin' for weeks in dusty Egypt, and not a sign have we yet seen of the enemy."

"What about the Australians then," cried Hal. "Ain't we waiting alongside of you? But it would be fine to drop in on a Turkish tea-party and get back to tell the fellows."

"Fine to get back, yes," the silent and thoughtful Alphonse called to them from his place at the tiller. "But—well, I've seen a heap of the Turks and something of the Germans. They're beasts, all of 'em. If we turned up in their camp and attended a tea-party it would be the last."

"Hear, hear, sir!" Jack ventured lustily. "I ain't above hopin' to have a bit of a scrap with them Turks

and them German Huns too when the time comes, but I ain't exactly axin' to be introduced to them at this moment. Still, if it was to come to that, we could fight 'em. There's five of us here, and some of us armed."

"Revolver and ammunition," said Claude, significantly tapping his holster.

"Ditto," echoed Hal, pulling the basket of food from the locker.

"And if Singleton's not quite an idiot he'll have put on board my revolver and ammunition and also a couple of rifles. I'd an idea we might get some shooting," explained the smiling Dereck.

"Shooting!" cried Alphonse. "What shooting?"

"Why—well, I don't exactly know," Dereck admitted.

"Nor do I. I've lived here many years, and never had a day's shooting save when after quail in the desert. The only shooting you'll get with a rifle in these times will be Turks and Arabs. That reminds me. Since this war began I've always carried a shooter."

"Suppose you'll have to join the French army?" asked Claude curiously, beginning to help his cousin to set out the eatables. "They've called up every man, haven't they?"

"But me," admitted Alphonse dismally. "I'm one of the few not wanted. I'm too lanky, too thin, too weak, they think, though I can march all day under a hot sun and a heavy load across the desert. I'm supposed to be too delicate. It's bad luck, I can tell you fellows. I volunteered as an interpreter to

the British forces, and an army surgeon at once tapped and prodded me all over."

"Well?" asked Dereck sympathetically.

"'No go. Delicate,' he said. 'Pity, though, since you speak the lingoes.'"

"And I suppose you do?" Hal questioned.

"Just as I speak English. Without so much as an accent, my boy," Alphonse told him. "It's nothing wonderful, for I've been at Port Said or in some part of Egypt since I was a lad. French is, of course, my native tongue, and English almost. Arab I knew when I was a nipper, and Turkish and other funny native tongues I've fallen into as if by accident. A trip through Palestine presents no difficulties. In Constantinople I feel like one of themselves. It's useful, of course, particularly in peace times, but now——"

The peaceful and subdued-looking Alphonse actually threw the stump of his cigar into the sea with a degree of violence not to be expected of him.

"Rotten, absolutely!" he exclaimed. "Almost wish this trip would dish us into some sort of difficulty. Then, if there was a scrap, and we were all in it, that army surgeon might think better of the matter. Thanks, Claude! I was wondering when one of you fellows was going to remember that because a fellow handles a tiller he needn't necessarily go without victuals. I'm hungry."

He was a good deal more than that. Little by little his companions were realizing that Alphonse, for all his queer appearance, for all his stooping and delicate aspect, his fearful clothes, his battered hat,

his long hair and unkempt person, was remarkably British in thought and action. He was slow, perhaps, but watchful. Jack had soon made himself sure of that. He had a quiet, self-contained air about him which at first gave the impression that he was, to use the lordly Dereck's words, soft—soft as butter. Now he was coming out of his shell. As he ate he was actually joking, and at the finish of the meal, when gusts of wind struck the sail and it was obvious to all that the sea was no longer the smooth mill-pond on which they had set out, he was handling his tiller with the skill and the coolness of a master.

"Yes, it does look dicky," Dereck admitted to the company, looking all about him. "I ain't over-keen to turn back, but——"

"I ain't so sure as we can just now, sir," Jack said. The sailor's eyes were watching the horizon, and for the moment his smiling face wore just a trace of concern—was almost grave, in fact.

"That there wind's shifted, sir," he told Dereck. "It's gone right round into the west and south, and a wind out o' Africa ain't of no use to anyone. If I was you, Mr. Albone, I'd dodge her back towards Port Said as fast as you can. But you'll have to look out for puffs and squalls. If it comes on to blow hard, real hard that is, there won't be any keepin' this old tub up into it. She'd founder with the first sea she bumped into. So we shall have to run—run too under lighter canvas."

He busied himself for a while with the sail, Dereck and Hal and Claude assisting him. Then every loose object in the boat was stowed away, the rifles

and revolvers being packed in the for'ard locker.

"In case she was to ship water," Dereck explained. "That'll keep the weapons and the ammunition dry. Say, Claude, ever been in a dust-up?"

"A how much?"

"A real storm."

"Never, except on a big ship, and then it wasn't anything to speak of. But in this old tub it would be different. Shouldn't mind, though. It would be a fine experience."

If he had looked carefully into Jack's face, or could have read the old sailor's mind, he would not perhaps have been so very cheerful. For the gallant fellow who had joined them—mostly, we must admit, just for the sheer enjoyment of being with them; though, with an old attachment to the Admiral, Dereck's father, Jack felt that he was in duty bound to watch over the son—this gallant fellow felt decidedly ill at ease at the moment.

"It's just the sort of thing that I kind of expected and feared, though there wasn't any reason," he was telling himself. "But I know his father, Admiral Lord Andus, and if ever there was a dashing, reckless orfficer it's him all over. This here chip off the old block is much the same, only he ain't got the experience of his father. I ain't so sorry I came now. We're in for a blow, a good 'un too, if I ain't a lubber."

Time and again his eyes swung round the horizon, and on each occasion Jack had cause to feel less and less pleasure. Black clouds filled the offing. Port Said and its neighbourhood were entirely blotted out,

while to the south the sun, still visible and glaring down upon them, lit up with a blood-red light a mass of clouds which seemed to be actually floating on the water. As for the latter, it swelled beneath the native boat, swelled oilily, rolling into white crests here and there, smooth in some places, yet rising and dipping sharply in others. It was as if some hidden force were already disturbing the water on which the boat floated, as if the sea were in fact conveying a warning.

"Don't like it at all," Jack thought. "Going to blow big guns, if I ain't a Dutchman."

He slid to the stern of the boat, and busied himself with a coil of rope and a couple of native oars used to ferry the boat when in harbour. There was a piece of torn sailcloth under the after seat, and Jack at once folded it and lashed the two ends to his spars.

"What for?" asked the curious Dereck.

"Sea-anchor, sir. Hope it won't be wanted; but if it blows hard, and we ain't able to keep her up to the wind with our sail up, we'd be wise to lower it completely and ride out the blow behind a sea-anchor. That's this here contrivance. Those spars'll float in the water, and the rope'll allow us to pay out quite a length, so as we shan't be too close to the anchor. The sailcloth'll fill with water, and when the wind catches hold of us, it and the spars will keep a grip of the water and will hold us bows up into the wind."

It was blowing harder already. Claude took off his wideawake hat and stowed it in the locker, an example which Hal followed, while Alphonse tossed his helmet to them. Dereck by now had been forced to jam his own cap hard down on his head, and even then had

fears of losing it. For the wind was coming in strong gusts which tore at headgear, at clothing, at any obstacle; which snatched at the sail and bellied it till it looked as if it would split asunder, while the pressure upon it forced the boat deep into the water. Broken crests of waves were all about them, and spray was dashing into their faces. As for their course, Alphonse could not keep the boat to it, for the wind threatened to capsize her at any moment.

"You'd best give way a little, sir," Jack advised. "I ain't suggestin' that I, the oldest sailor here, should take the tiller, 'cos I can see with half an eye that you know what you're doin'. But that's sound advice—a sailor's advice. Give way a little. Put her more before the wind while you can. Only, if it blows stronger we shall have to do as I've said afore and lay to to a sea-anchor."

Half an hour later the sun had entirely disappeared behind a huge bank of black clouds, while the wind was whistling through the rigging. All five occupants of the boat were crouching as low as possible, Alphonse still at the tiller, while the rest wedged themselves on the windward side, so as to ballast the craft and make a capsize less easy. They were tossing heavily, too, and though the boat was by no means small, she was thrown about as if she were a mere cork, till the sensation and the movement were far from pleasant. Then a heavier squall than usual swept down upon them.

"Put her right up into it, sir," shouted Jack. "Now, we'd best get that sea-anchor overboard and our sail lowered. Quick's the words, gentlemen.

There's no time to be wasted. Mr. Albone, you keep hold of the tiller till we've done the job. Mr. Claude, you and your cousin let that sail down with a run. Now's the time! We're into the wind, and the pressure is taken off it. Now, Mr. Smallweed, sir, over she goes with the sea-anchor."

Fortunate indeed was it for our four young friends that the gallant and jovial Jack had so far broken rules and regulations as to intrude his presence upon them. For this was undoubtedly a storm of unusual violence, and without him they would certainly have foundered. Even now they were far from safe, though the sail had been successfully lowered and the sea-anchor cast overboard. Indeed, now that Jack had paid out a long length of native rope the boat rode comfortably, taking in little water, and rising above the rolling seas with a motion which was far easier than that which they had already experienced.

"Doing fine!" Dereck shouted in Claude's ear. "Like it?"

"Supposing we drifted and drifted," asked his cousin with a grin, "where should we land up?"

Alphonse had heard the question, and gave the answer. "At the bottom of the sea, perhaps, or along the coast of the desert. If not there, then somewhere on the coast of Palestine. Not the sort of place for trippers in these days."

Crash! There was a sharp jerk, which would have thrown them from their feet if they had been standing. Jack gave vent to a loud exclamation of annoyance, and then all sounds were smothered by the roar of the tempest. For a gust had struck them, a gust far

fiercer than any that had preceded it, almost stifling them with its force, deafening them with its shriek and roar, and pressing them to the bottom of the boat with irresistible power and violence. As for the jerk, it was the native rope which had given way just a foot from the sea-anchor. Jack clenched his fists as he realized what had happened.

"We're goners," he thought. "She's been simply pitched round by that gust, and if she don't founder these next few seconds she'll be driven along like a shot from a cannon. Then if she lurches to either side she's sure to get swamped by the waves that's following. Lend a hand there!" he shouted hoarsely.

Dereck and Alphonse, who were nearest, at once crept towards him.

"Get a pull on this main-sheet," the sailor roared. "We must let the old girl show just a rag of canvas. It'll keep her before the wind, and make her race away from the waves following. There's one, right aboard of us. Quick, for your lives, all of you!"

They threw themselves upon the rope, while Alphonse, careless of the mass of water which had come inboard and had almost swamped them, gave his place to Claude and went to the tiller. With great exertion, and at the risk of being tossed overboard or washed out of the boat, they managed to hoist just the tip of the native sail till the wind caught it. And instantly they felt the relief. The waves which raced after them, as if eager to swamp the boat, and one of which had almost effected that purpose, now merely flopped against the broad stern, casting spray all over them. For the boat was simply flying before the

wind, churning the dark water at her stern and throwing up frothing billows.

For hours they ran before the gale, expecting at any moment to be swamped: and as the minutes sped by there was no sign of the storm's abatement.

"Which shows as we must be patient," Jack shouted at the others. "And since we're in this little trouble, and may just as well face things comfortably as otherwise, suppose we was to pipe down to a meal. Beggin' pardon, Mr. Smallweed, but facts is facts, and this here's common sense."

More than that, it fell in with the wishes of the whole party.

"Funny! I'm ravenous," Hal told his cousins.

"Jolly glad I told Singleton to put aboard heaps of grub and bottled beer," Dereck bellowed. "Jack's a philosopher. If a chap has to die he might just as well die with an interior that feels jolly and comfortable. Wonder what the Commander will say when he wakes up to-morrow?"

But they had not yet reached the morrow, though night had fallen now—a pitch-black night, hideous and cold and threatening. And through all the hours that followed they tore their way through the water, bailing constantly, and yet hardly keeping the boat free of the spray which almost swamped them. They were wet to the skin, wretchedly cold, but cheerful. Then the light came, but grew imperceptibly, as if the storm were attempting to suppress the morning.

"Land ho!" Jack shouted the words and then clenched his fists. He could hear the roar of surf breaking on a coast-line nearly adjacent to them.

"May the Lord above help us!" he muttered. "This here boat's due to pile up on that coast and break herself to little pieces."

Sunk deep into the bottom of the boat, with Alphonse still pluckily at the tiller, the five watched with staring eyes as the coast drew rapidly nearer.

"Swim?" asked Dereck of Claude.

"Yes, rather."

"And Hal?"

"Like an otter."

"Alphonse, swim?" he repeated, reaching across to the Frenchman.

"No. Not a stroke. But that don't matter. Hang on, you fellows. I'll drive her as high as she'll go. Swimming ain't much use on these occasions."

Anyone could have told them that. A glance at the coast, now that they were almost upon it, was sufficient. For mountainous waves tore past them and crashed upon the sand, smashing into foam and spray in all directions. They were in the midst of those waves now: the coast-line seemed actually to rush at them. Then, crash! they were flung to right and left. It was the end of the trip for Dereck and his companions.

CHAPTER III

The Enemy's Country

MR. MIDSHIPMAN SMALLWEED sat up with a jerk and exclaimed loudly. Then he rammed the knuckles of his hands into the sockets of his two tired and salt-grimed eyes and rubbed vigorously—so vigorously, in fact, that he set his eyes smarting. And what a bad temper he was in on this beautiful, gloriously hot day in the desert!

"Bah!" He shook his head and actually shivered. With difficulty he contrived to loosen his tongue, which seemed to have become glued to the interior of his mouth, and thrusting it forward exposed it to the sunlight. Then the Hon. Dereck looked at his nether garments, at his sodden shoes, at his socks dangling downward in the most shabby and unsmart manner, and then, as if impelled by constant habit to it, he bent forward with difficulty and pulled up those two offending garments. But what a crick it gave to his back!

"Bah!" he growled. "Like a rusty hinge. What the—where the dickens am I? Where are the others? And—Jingo, what a thirst I've got! Must have swallowed tons of that beastly water. Halloo!"

Stiff back or no stiff back, it was marvellous how rapidly Mr. Midshipman Smallweed managed to leap to his feet when, quite by chance, he happened to turn his head and neck stiffly and glance behind him. For there was something there quite sufficient to startle even the coolest of His Majesty's most gallant sailors. A tall figure bent over the startled snottie—a figure swathed in the most voluminous and white of garments, a man with a turbaned head, and a face so muffled that only two very sinister eyes were visible, and who carried a modern rifle over one shoulder and in his belt a perfect battery of daggers and pistols.

Ah! The fellow had kicked the Hon. Dereck. The midshipman remembered now that it was a violent jolt which had brought him to his senses, from a condition of unconsciousness, perhaps, or from the depths of the deepest of slumbers. Dereck eyed him for a few moments, eyed him doubtfully. Not that he was frightened; but our midshipman was not such a reckless fool as not to be able to realize that he himself was unarmed, and that this ruffian was armed to the teeth with sufficient weapons to supply a company of soldiers. Then slowly, as if habit were too strong for him, he felt for his cap to push it to its accustomed rakish angle, but found it gone, and then began to turn up the draggled sleeves of his sopping coat.

"You—you—who are you?" he demanded boldly. "Where the dickens am I, and where are my chums?"

To his absolute amazement the answer came in the most perfect of English, in drawling, familiar tones.

"That's what I've come to tell you. Couldn't do

it before, for you've been dead to the world, dead fast asleep, and there was no waking you. Now——"

"What! It's you—Alphonse!"

"Why not?" came the curt answer. "Couldn't you spot that?"

"Bah!" Dereck growled out an exclamation. "You gave me a start," he admitted. "Thought you were some beastly Arab. Was getting ready for a ruction. And—and it's really you, Alphonse! Well, I'm hanged! I'd never have recognized you. But—but what does it all mean? And—and, I say, I'm as dry as a dust-heap."

"Try that, then. Found 'em where these togs came from. An orange will be food and drink in one. My! what a sight you are! The Commander wouldn't know you."

Dereck simply threw himself upon that orange and bit his way ravenously into it. "Hang the Commander!" he spluttered, his nose and lips all stained. "What do I care about looks? Tell me where we are, what the time is, and—and about the others. Besides, there's you. How the dickens did you manage to get that costume? But I must say you look fine, Alphonse. The dress suits you A 1. You look absolutely topping. Quite the part, don't you know, and—Ah, that's better! A fellow can get his tongue to twist and turn, and can manage to talk a little."

"A little?" grinned Alphonse. "But sit down, Dereck. I expect you're a bit shaken still. Yesterday, when we bumped ashore here——"

"Yesterday?" shouted the middy.

"Yes, to be sure, yesterday."

"But that was to-day. We were washed ashore this morning. I remember perfectly."

"And now the sea is as calm as a mill-pond, and the sun shines beautifully down upon us! Sounds likely, eh?" said Alphonse satirically. "Why, man alive, that was yesterday, I tell you. The storm raged well on into the afternoon after we were blown ashore. It quietened down at night, and here you see it, all gay and smiling."

"And I—you mean—" began Dereck incredulously, but unable to disbelieve the Frenchman. Also, common sense, which was beginning to come back to his somewhat shaken brain, told him that there must be truth in what was stated. Besides——

"About three in the afternoon," he reflected, looking up at the sun and measuring its position. "Yes, a fellow can see that the storm couldn't have abated so suddenly. But—but how on earth can I have lain here all that time? There's Claude, too, and Hal and Jack—and you. How and where did you get that costume?"

That seemed to puzzle and interest the middy more than anything. And all the time, as he sat on a hump of sand and looked at the tall Arab beside him, Dereck could not help contrasting the Alphonse he had known in European clothes with the Alphonse now presented to him—this tall, almost austere, courageous-looking man, whose piercing eyes seemed to look right through him. The change puzzled him wonderfully. No one, he admitted to himself with a qualm of regret—no one could accuse this tall Arab

of looking like a mother's darling, a namby-pamby fellow. Could it be that clothes made the man?

"Have another orange." Alphonse produced one from somewhere amidst the folds of his capacious garments, and watched as Dereck devoured it. "Now, come along," he said, offering an arm; and, strange to say, the middy was glad to take advantage of such assistance, for he felt distinctly weak.

"Groggy, eh?" he grinned at Alphonse. "Absolutely rotten! Suppose I must have had a rough time of it? I'm surprised to be alive, I can tell you. But do tell me about the others."

"All well, Dereck. Knocked about, of course, and half drowned, but pulling round and doing nicely. Jack and I found 'em on the shore just beyond the reach of the waves, and took 'em inland to the house we've borrowed."

"Borrowed?"

"Yes. The owner ain't likely to want it any longer," said Alphonse softly. "You see, he wanted to oppose our landing. We're enemies in these parts, my boy, and the beggar got irritated with us. We'd hardly bashed the bottom boards of our boat on the sands when he started firing."

"But—really! I heard nothing. It sounds like a fairy tale. So Claude and Hal and Jack are safe. Do go on with the yarn," begged Dereck, finding it quite a job now to get along in spite of the assistance Alphonse was giving him. Indeed, his feet felt like lumps of lead at which the sandy stretch of coast tugged and clung, and his head buzzed and swam, and gave him the painful impression that it was or

the point of exploding. For Dereck had been considerably more battered than he imagined. Indeed, his arrival on this coast-line had been neither premeditated nor exactly welcomed. Those waves which had rushed the native boat towards this part of Palestine had flung him and his comrades ashore with a rude violence which had nearly robbed them of their existence. And having cast them upon the sands with a jerk which smashed the after part of their boat to matchwood, the sea had then done its utmost to snatch at them again, to drag their unconscious figures into its cold embrace and drown them.

No wonder Dereck felt "groggy". It would have been extraordinary had he not been weak and out-of-sorts and giddy. Besides, he had fasted for hours now—and what were two oranges? Intuitively Alphonse seemed to gather that his comrade was worse than he appeared, though Dereck made no complaint and struggled gamely. But for all that, his feet were getting heavier and heavier, his breath coming faster and in short gasps, while it was as much as, and almost more than he could do to keep himself upright. Alphonse stopped.

"Get hold of me round the neck, old chap," he said kindly. "You're weak as yet, and want assistance. A little of the broth that Jack's preparing will do you a world of good and make you as strong as a lion. Up you go. Why, I've carried fellows heavier than you before and not felt it."

That was one of the remarkable things about this young Frenchman. He looked, in European clothes, weak and delicate; but in the garb of an Arab he had

the appearance of robust strength, and proved himself to possess it. In a vague sort of way Dereck found himself wondering at this truly inexplicable transformation, while he meekly gave way and allowed himself to be carried. That in itself was a clear indication of his condition. If you had told the lordly Dereck, a day or so before, that in such and such a space of time he would be carried as if he were a mere child, and that by the delicate-looking and effeminate Alphonse, he would have answered, with a roar of laughter: "Bosh! Utter rot! What, Alphonse—that fellow! Carry me—me, Dereck!"

Yet here he was, as docile as a child, and really quite grateful. Clinging feebly to his chum, he was borne up the long sandy slope of the foreshore till they topped a ridge. Then Alphonse struck off towards a clump of green palms growing at only a little distance, and having arrived beneath them, he deposited his burden on a mass of leaves flung down in their shadow. Two other figures lay there also—Claude's and Hal's, both of them sleeping deeply. As for Dereck, he obediently swallowed a mugful of the most delicious, nectar-like water, and then fell asleep, even before Alphonse could lower his head on to a bunched-up heap of leaves.

There he lay sleeping peacefully for hours and hours, while the sun slowly sank behind the sand ridge and a glorious moon came up in the heavens. It, too, travelled to its rest, and once more the first rays of the rising sun put in an appearance, sweeping across the eastern desert, throwing into strong outline distant ridges and elevations, and casting long,

flickering shadows of the palm trees across the sand to the west of where Dereck was lying.

Farther away, within a short stone's-throw, there was another collection of trees, and beneath them a tent of gaudily-painted canvas, the front of which had been lifted to act as an awning, so that there was a wide opening. Out of this a man came briskly, a somewhat short, sturdily-built and rather dirty-looking bearded Arab. He swung his arms and his body in the most curious fashion—a fashion which looked positively ridiculous when seen in such a person; in fact the sort of fashion, the roll and shuffle that one might have expected in the case of some old sailor. His arms bared to the elbows, his turban thrust backward on his head, this Arab collected sticks from the encampment and soon had a fire going. Then he produced an iron pot from the interior of the tent, and having made a rough form of tripod, swung the pot over the fire. His next movements were most extraordinary. He produced a roll of some soft material, opened it cautiously and held it to the flames for some minutes, as if he were drying the contents. Then he produced an object from beneath the folds of his rather dirty garments, thrust it among the dried contents of the roll of cloth, and finally between his lips. A second later he was holding a flaring stick to the end of this object, while clouds of smoke issued from between his lips.

Dereck, now awake, in that deliciously dreamy state which arises before one is perfectly conscious, watched the figure of the man with a queer feeling of curiosity. He wasn't even yet quite conscious of his

surroundings, and he had utterly forgotten all that had happened. He might have been aboard ship for all he knew, just dreaming the most fantastic of dreams, waiting for Singleton to bring in his shaving water. For the Hon. Dereck was a stickler for all that was correct and proper. It was correct for every officer in the Royal Navy to shave, therefore Dereck shaved, or made a pretence of doing so. But—that pipe; for it was a pipe that the Arab was smoking—Dereck rolled over on to his elbow and stared hard at the man. "Hi!" he called.

"'Mornin', sir," cried Jack—for it was Jack without a doubt. Anyone who had known him elsewhere could have told you that. Nothing could convert this old sailor into a real Arab. "Mornin', sir," he repeated. "Glad you've woke up. I'm a-preparin' breakfast."

That brought Dereck to a sitting position. "Breakfast," he said eagerly. "Sounds good."

"Smells better, sir. A bit o' kid stewing. There's a sort of beans with it, and if you're hungry, why, there's heaps for all. Mr. Alphonse'll be out in a minute, and if the other gentlemen are fit, why, beggin' pardon, Mr. Smallweed, if you don't object, the party can fall to."

If he didn't object! Why, Dereck was ravenous, positively famishing. He got to his feet at once and felt stronger and better. More than that, he remembered all that had passed, all except the manner of his coming ashore. Bending over Claude and Hal, he discovered that they too were in a half-sleeping, half-dreaming condition. Soon, therefore, they too were

sitting up and sniffing eagerly. In less than five minutes, in fact, all five were gathered about Jack's cooking-pot; and there being no forks, and fingers having been invented long before, as Alphonse gaily told them, officers and man at once set to work to help themselves, all formalities and all differences of rank being forgotten for the moment.

"Now perhaps you'll be good enough to spin us the whole yarn," said Dereck, when the meal was finished and all were satisfied. "Do Claude and Hal know it?"

"Just a little," admitted the former. "Alphonse got to the stage where he had found us on the shore and had carried us here. I don't remember a bit about it. But I do recollect finding myself under these trees, and drinking as if I could drain a well dry. Hal was here, too; but you, Dereck, where the dickens did you spring from? And—I say—what a trip! What'll the Admiral say? What'll your Commander do? There'll be fine ructions. You'll probably get the sack. I—you——"

"Rot! Stow it! Hang the Admiral and the Commander!" exclaimed Dereck. "Who knows? Perhaps they'll have cause to thank us all. If we're in the enemy's country we may pick up something good."

"Or bad," Alphonse chimed in bluntly. "And whatever we happen to pick up, it isn't the only little business we've got to see to. We've got to the enemy's country right enough. That's granted. It wasn't exactly any of our doing. But having got here so uncomfortably, how are we going to get out of it again? That's the teaser. However, you fellows

sit tight. I'll give the yarn. George! I'm glad those cigars weren't washed away when we landed."

He puffed with undoubted relish at one of the weeds, and looked closely at his chums. As for them, even now that they were more or less accustomed to the presence of this tall, dignified young Arab, they could hardly believe their senses.

"Alphonse? Impossible!"

"Now listen, and let us get it finished," he said. "We came ashore with the boat in an awful heap, and with a thump that drove the breath out of the bodies of all of us. I don't profess to know what happened to you fellows. But what I do know is that we were all of us scattered. We were flung out of the boat with violence, and I for one landed high up on the beach, on hands and knees, scarcely knowing or caring what had happened. Then I looked round. There was our sailor-man Jack, sitting upright, trying to light his pipe and looking cross and wretched."

The worthy Jack grinned at them all in turn, and touched his turban in Dereck's direction.

"Gospel, gentlemen. Beggin' pardon, Mr. Smallweed, but I didn't rightly know what had happened, and when I gets into a fix of any sort I always has a turn at my bacca. It kind of helps. It lets a man think. Not as I had sich an extry time just then for thinking."

He winked most openly at Alphonse and nodded. "You get on with it, Mr. Alphonse, sir," he said, with a wave of his pipe, which he had again set going. "I was there, a-tryin' to get wet bacca to

light, and that without a dry match to rely on. I was just cussin', feeling silly still, and not knowing rightly whether I was aloft or on deck—kind of upside-down, as it were. He knows," he added, jerking a large thumb at the Frenchman. "You tell 'em the rest, Mr. Alphonse."

Alphonse grinned and pulled at his cigar. "Hadn't much time to think? Rather not!" he told his audience. "Before I had got my breath again, and while I was just in the condition Jack has described, what should happen but——"

"What?" demanded Dereck eagerly.

"Yes. What?" came from the others, with no less impatience.

"I was coming to it. You've stopped me now, switched me off as it were," grumbled Alphonse. "The thing that happened made me start with a vengeance. I heard a shot fired, just a faint report, for you must remember that it was blowing great guns, and what with the wind and the sea dashing on the coast, sounds were almost obliterated. Then something struck the sand close beside me. Well, who was to know that a ruffian was taking pot-shots at me? Eh?"

He looked round with some indignation. Claude nodded, so did Hal and Dereck, their flushed faces showing that they were stirred by the tale.

"Not playing the game quite, eh?" reflected Claude. "But then, of course, when you go and drop uninvited into an enemy's country you can't expect a welcome—at least, not the usual friendly sort of thing. You got a warm one, Alphonse. Then——?"

"There was another shot. I didn't hear the report, but the bullet grazed my shoulder. It made me angry. I knew by then that someone was trying to shoot me down, and thought, like you, Claude, that it was a dirty trick to play, considering all I had had to put up with. Besides, the graze smarted. I looked round——"

Jack grinned and nodded at the audience, as much as to warn them to listen carefully, since something interesting was coming. "He looked round," he said, turning his own head in a circle, in a manner more than expressive, and certainly ridiculous.

"And spotted a fellow up on the ridge kneeling down and coolly shooting at me," Alphonse ended.

"The bounder!" growled Claude. "What did you do?"

"That's it," laughed Jack, rubbing his hands together. "You see, gentlemen, I didn't know as anyone was shootin', and I was still kind of silly. But you'd hardly believe what I seed then with these two eyes, for Mr. Alphonse there you'd have said was strange to fightin'. He'd got his dander up, though he looked cool and the same as usual. He was just strolling up towards the ridge where I could see this Arab nigger a-levellin' a gun at him. He didn't hurry though, not a bit of it. He seemed to dawdle as it were. I see two bullets kick the sand up by his feet and yet not hasten him a atom. Then he got close to his man."

"Ah! getting exciting," thought Dereck. He stole a look at Alphonse. The Frenchman returned his glance without flinching, without noticing, in fact.

He was icily cold. That expression of cool, calm dignity still marked him.

"What was a fellow to do, then?" he asked. "Rush up the hill and attack an armed man when winded! Not for me, thank you. It was better to let him have his pot-shots. After all, he'd only got an old breech-loader, and with that wind blowing shooting isn't so jolly easy. Still, he did his best. When I drew his fire the last time, and that within a few feet of me, the bullet nearly ended my business. However, he missed, and that was the end of it."

"The end of it," gasped Dereck. "You mean——"

"You killed the beggar?" cried Claude, incredulous. Alphonse, the weak, mother's darling of an Alphonse, kill anyone, indeed! Impossible!

"We've all of us made a rotten mistake," Hal told the party with a directness and a bluntness which were pronounced. "How did you do it?" he asked.

"Closed with him, wrestled for a bit, and then seized his curved dagger. It was a hot fight while it lasted," said Alphonse, flushing ever so little.

"You may take my word for it, Mr. Smallweed, sir, and you two gentlemen, it were a warm bit of business," declared Jack, striking in at this moment. "For a while as I watched and couldn't help—for when I wanted to get to my legs and run in that direction my pins wouldn't hold me—you could see two bodies just mixed altogether, and legs and arms in every direction. Then they got locked tight for about a minute, and you could see that they was each of them preparing for a final effort. It was then that Mr. Alphonse suddenly broke away and landed the

Arab a smack in the jaw with his fist that must have felt like the kick of a thoroughbred. It staggered that Arab. It gave Mr. Alphonse his chance. He got a grip of a weapon while I was staring. Then they went in at it again, the Arab wavin' a huge sort of sword, and Mr. Alphonse flourishin' his dagger, a big, curved affair that gives me the creeps when I look at it. It's there in his belt, won by honest, uphill fighting."

Reluctantly Alphonse produced the weapon and handed it round, while Claude and Hal and Dereck inspected it closely and cast sidelong glances at one another. What were they to do, to say, to think? They felt utterly foolish. More, they felt that their thoughts had been contemptible. Not that they had ever expressed them openly to Alphonse. On the contrary, one and all had felt rather sorry for this forlorn and lanky young Frenchman, and it was entirely out of the generous goodness of his heart that Dereck had invited him to join the party. But, let us add, his invitation had been accompanied by a *sotto voce* apology to his cousins. And here was a revelation! In the person of this tall, delicate-looking, effeminate young fellow there was discovered a fire-eater, taking matters with amazing coolness, in a matter-of-fact way, indeed, as if to run in at an armed Arab were just ordinary business, and as if a hand-to-hand encounter was of everyday occurrence. No wonder that Claude and Hal regarded their sailor cousin in that sidelong way. This was a matter which, naturally enough, they could not discuss before the Frenchman. They would have to get together, all alone,

before they could give their tongues free play, and then they would have to admit themselves utterly wrong in their judgment of this comrade of theirs, and that they had one and all received a salutary lesson.

"I'll never judge another fellow by his looks alone," thought Dereck. "Shake hands," he said, stretching forward and gripping Alphonse's palm. "We're mighty proud of you."

"Splendid!" cried Claude and Hal. "And you've saved our lives, I fancy," reflected the former. "That beggar would have shot you and Jack down, and would then have cut the throats of the rest of us. Well, let's have the yarn finished. You killed the man, Alphonse."

"Yes," he nodded curtly, while those deep-set eyes of his went round the circle. They appeared too to penetrate the brain of each one of his companions. Did he, too, realize what was passing in the heads of Claude and his friends? Did he know what opinion the cousins had held of him? If he did, Alphonse gave no indication. He was just the grave, friendly fellow they had found him before, and no doubt, transformed back into a European, he would have looked as lanky and effeminate as ever, as unsmart, as undashing, and as namby-pamby as they make them. Now he was a figure to look at. Those flowing robes hid his ugly angularities, his flowing locks were bound up in his turban, while that and the swathing round his face seemed to match well with his particular cast of countenance. Dereck remembered the first view he had had of this tall Arab, remembered the impression of strength and dignity it had made

upon him, and, remembering that, he saw how well the picture matched with the strength of character, the courage and fortitude which Alphonse's single-handed action demonstrated.

"Afterwards?" he asked, and his voice sounded thin and meek.

"Oh, afterwards—— Well, Jack soon got his wind. Then we had a look round and found the forward end of the boat smashed to pieces and lying some yards up the beach. What was left of our grub was there, as well as our rifles, revolvers, and ammunition. Near by was Claude, as insensible as a plank of wood, and likely enough soon to get washed out to sea if he wasn't taken higher up out of the reach of the water. Then we found Hal and you, Dereck, both of you knocked out and insensible, and evidently in need of water. So off we went to find it, and following the tracks of the beggar who had tried to pot us we came to this place. And—that's all."

There was a long pause, during which Jack smoked on unconcernedly, while the four chums looked from one to another.

"Then what's the position exactly?" asked Dereck after a while. "Is there any sort of a port near where we can get a boat back to the Canal?"

Alphonse shook his head. "Nothing," he said. "We're miles, I should say, from any port, and, guessing roughly, I fancy that we are on the coast of Palestine between Jaffa and Rafa, nearer the latter, most likely. That means that the gale blew us right across from the Canal and past the desert of Sinai, the natural barrier which lies between Egypt and Pales-

tine, and which you Colonials have been watching. It's somewhere hereabouts that report says the Turks are concentrating for the attack which they have openly announced they will make on the Canal."

"Which means—what?" asked Claude after a while.

"Anything—nothing."

"Capture, perhaps," suggested Dereck.

"Most likely, and the rest. There will be roving bands of Arabs scouting along the coast. This is one of their stations, and before very long those who are away will certainly return. If they find us here we shall be taken. If we leave they will soon get on to our tracks and trace us. We can't smother them. Another storm following our departure would do that for us, but then storms don't come along always when they're wanted."

"Just so," admitted Dereck dryly. "That being the case, I vote we make ourselves comfortable here for a while, till we get the hang of our surroundings and find out how far the nearest port is. If the enemy comes along we must just tackle 'em."

Naturally enough, neither he nor his companions were anxious to be taken; but facts had to be faced, and when three days had passed and they had had time to look about them, it was only to discover that they were indeed in the country of the enemy. Bands of Arabs could be seen from an elevation a mile from their camp riding their camels in the far distance. Sometimes men in European clothes were seen; and late on the third day Jack, who had swarmed to the top of one of the palms under which they dwelt, declared that he could see a party of men approaching.

"Certainly. Arabs. Mounted on camels," agreed Alphonse when he had climbed to join him.

"On camels. Now, if—" said Dereck—"if we could only——"

"We'll do it," declared Claude. "Take the whole bunch. Yes. Let's make ready."

CHAPTER IV

Hostile Arabs

It was a sin and a shame to think that men must fight in the midst of such glorious surroundings as those which lay about Mr. Midshipman Smallweed, his cousins, Alphonse, and Jack Barnsby. For even a desert can be beautiful, and now that the strangeness of it had in a measure worn off, and they had become accustomed to the vast spaces about them, not one of the five but appreciated the beauties of this particular form of nature. On every hand smooth sand stretched, illimitably it seemed, right up to and no doubt beyond the horizon, though to their immediate south the ridge which hid all that was beyond it marked, as they knew well enough, that descending slope which led to the ocean—a smooth, delightfully blue ocean now, so calm indeed, so sunlit and smiling, that it seemed impossible to believe it ever could be stirred to violence. And in all this waste, a dreary waste as they had at first thought it, there was one prominent feature, the clump of trees which shadowed their encampment —their home, as they were beginning to view it.

For the rest, elevations of sand cropped up here and there, and to the west a long sandy ridge cut into the heavens, so high, in fact, that the sun descending

behind it disappeared from view quite two hours before it must have done to those whose vision was not so obstructed. And what glorious sunset effects that ridge produced! What slanting rays of every imaginable colour, what mirages of smooth, blue lakes, of eastern cities, of caravans of dusky people!

As for their encampment itself, it was indeed an enchanted oasis. There was water there in abundance, and by a fortuitous chance the palms above were loaded with dates in perfect condition. In addition, the man who had stood guard on this part of the coast had filled in the many odd and idle moments he must have had in tending a small herd of goats. They gambolled now, those that remained of them, beneath the palms, finding ample sustenance in the grass growing beneath the palm trees. Goat flesh, our heroes had discovered, was essentially palatable, and, moreover, the worthy Jack had turned out to be a cook, a chef indeed of the very first water.

Now the picture must be spoiled. They must fight for their lives. The cousins, Alphonse, Jack, all knew it.

"And we'll get through with the business," Dereck told them all, as he swarmed down from one of the trees after staring across the desert. "There are twelve of those beggars, all mounted on camels, all Arabs."

"And all allies of the Turks," Alphonse added.

"Then what's the move?" asked Claude. "As a decent type of soldier—not Huns, mark you—we can't be expected to shoot those fellows down as they approach us. Shoot 'em down without warning, I mean. Now, can we?"

"You needn't worry," came from Alphonse. "I know your Arab pretty well. He's not to be taken in so easily, and won't be shot down just for the sake of a warning. You don't imagine that they won't suspect that there's something funny about this encampment?"

"Why?" demanded Hal. "We ain't in sight. We're well under cover. They couldn't have seen you fellows in the trees. What's to tell them?"

"Just this. The fellow who was here before us would have been out signalling to them already. Those fellows are likely enough a band who ride round the coast outlooks. They'll expect a report from the Arab who was here, and when he doesn't turn up they will suspect something. You never can tell which way an Arab's mind is leading. They're as cunning as they make 'em, and supposing I was to move out now and signal to 'em, that wouldn't convince them that there wasn't something rummy. Besides, there are our footprints. It's been dead calm since that storm abated, and there's been absolutely no breeze to blow the sand over the hollows and impressions we shall have left. So, Claude, my boy, you needn't be too tender-hearted."

"Then, if discovery is certain, let's at least make plans and prepare to meet 'em," cried Dereck. "Look here, Alphonse, you know a lot about these beggars, and must advise us. If I was boss of this little lot—which I ain't, for we're ashore—"—and he stole a look at his cousins—"I'd say we ought to prepare some sort of a trench so as to have cover. Then we ought to lie very doggo, don't you know, so as to puzzle them. After all, supposing they do trace our footsteps

and get to know that someone's been in this place, how are they to know who it is, how many of us there are, and whether we are still in the encampment?"

Alphonse shaded his eyes with one hand and stared across the desert. All five were at the moment sheltering amongst the palms, their figures hidden behind the long grass growing there, and concealed from the view of the enemy by a hummock of sand which cropped up on the flat outside, at a distance of twenty yards or so. But once the Arabs riding towards them cleared that hummock and got nearer, the grass would no longer hide them, for this oasis was, after all, but a bare patch of green, out of which protruded the bare stems of the palm trees.

"Not half bad," observed Claude; and then, as if he could not help but take advantage of the opportunity of quizzing his sailor cousin, he grinned and added, "for Dereck, for a naval officer."

"Good sound common sense, beggin' pardon," declared the honest Jack, just a little nettled, though he, too, was not above seeing the humour of the situation sometimes created by the lordly Dereck. Yet he knew right well the stuff of which the middy was constructed.

"We'll do it," said Alphonse abruptly. "Listen to this. Trenches in this sand are an impossibility. But we can easily scoop shallow places which will hide our figures and give us cover. Let's set about them at once—that is, four of us. The fifth will have to be posted in the trees, and he should be the best shot amongst us."

"That's Hal," declared Claude, "unless——" and he looked at Dereck sharply.

"Agreed. Hal's the man," exclaimed the middy warmly. "Then the trenches or hollows, Alphonse —I suppose we shall not all want to be together; and there are water and food to be considered."

"Just the very point I was considering. The well lies in the very centre of this clump of trees, and we should be all round it, and not too close together; yet we ought to be sufficiently near one another to be able to join forces promptly if we are rushed. Of course the trees will give us good shelter in case of a rush, for they could not ride their camels amongst them."

"And what about the other lot of trees?" asked Hal, pointing to the second group beneath which their tent was situated. Indeed, it was there that their main camp existed, for both camp and goats were kept as far from the well as possible, so as to make sure that the water should not become contaminated. "You see," he explained, "if four of you lie near the well, that group of trees will mask your fire in one direction, and also give cover to the enemy. Seems to me that that's the place for me. One of the trees there is certainly higher than all the others, and if I were perched right up amongst the leaves on top I should be finely hidden, could shout information to you fellows, and could check a rush in that direction."

"Then the sooner we set about carrying out our plans the better," cried Dereck. "Hal, you'll want one of the rifles and plenty of ammunition. Not that we've a huge supply, so you'll have to go easy with it. That'll leave one rifle and a revolver each to the

four down below, and though it ain't much, it's something."

"Besides, there's that breech-loader I captured from the Arab who was so unkind to us on landing," Alphonse told them with a smile. "It'll be as good, perhaps, as any the enemy may possess. Let's get to work. Hal, take that bit of twisted stuff we found here and make your way aloft. While you watch we can get our shallow trenches ready."

But Jack was not the one to let a comrade make his way to what might be an uncomfortable position without taking some precautions.

"You'll like enough be aloft for some hours, Mr. Hal, sir," he said. "You'll get hot and tired and thirsty. So if you'll jest tie this here line as I brought ashore tight round your waist, by the time you've got to the top I shall have things ready for you. There's that gourd that you can have filled with water. There's a cut of that last kid we cooked that'll help to keep away hunger, while if you're requiring a real sort of a blow-out, as we terms it below decks, why, there's dates all to hand, just for the plucking. You go aloft, sir, without your rifle. I'll send that up fust thing."

Once their plans were made, it was wonderful with what celerity they carried them out. Swarming to the top of one of the trees was by no means a difficulty, though at first it had seemed to be almost an insurmountable one. But then, as one might have anticipated, seeing that these were the only trees for miles and miles, and lifted their heads far above the desert, they became at once a natural station for an

outlook. From the highest of them, in fact, one could peer over that adjacent ridge and see the blue ocean, while on every other side the sandy waste stretching so far into the distance was exposed to clear view, so that nothing could escape a watchman. And it was for this reason that the Arab who had inhabited the oasis had constructed a species of belt which he could pass round the trunk of the tree and about his own body. Then it was a simple matter to jerk his way upward. It followed, therefore, that Hal, who had made the attempt before, met with no unusual difficulty, and while Dereck and his friends were busily scooping hollows for their bodies down at the foot of the other group of palms, the young Australian swarmed to the tree-top. And to that point he soon hauled his rifle, the pot or gourd of water Jack had prepared, and a ration of meat wrapped in a palm-leaf. At Jack's advice, too, he had tied a length of platted grass round his brows, and had secured a large palm-leaf to it, thus covering his head completely from the rays of the sun and making him more invisible.

"They've come to a halt," he shouted after a while. "They're gathered together in a bunch and, I suppose, are jawing."

Dereck left the shelter of the hollow he had prepared, and swarmed aloft to join his cousin. For as yet the enemy were quite a mile away, though in that clear atmosphere the distance was dwarfed, and they seemed to be almost within shouting distance. Certainly a novice would have considered them to be well within easy rifle-shot.

"Could almost pot 'em from here," observed Dereck, seating himself amongst the leaves at Hal's side. "Twelve of 'em. All Arabs, eh?"

"Well, I'm not certain. One of them seems to have a helmet. Perhaps he's an officer. Two of them have dismounted from their camels and are walking about."

"Looking at footprints, or I'm a Dutchman. I'd give something to be able to hear and understand what they're saying," said Dereck. "Ah! They're mounting again."

"No, they ain't," his cousin corrected him. "One's mounted only."

"Right. Apologize. T'other's handed his camel over and is walking in front of the party. The dirty sweep! he's coming in this direction."

Hal laughed carelessly. It made him merry to listen to this jovial and lordly cousin of his. For Dereck Smallweed was indeed a curious specimen. Even now, when a tragedy threatened him and his comrades, he spoke magnificently. And yet, mixed up with his words, intruding at every odd moment, were slangy remarks, typical of snotties.

"The dirty sweeps!" he said again. "Why don't they go off in the opposite direction? Though I ain't so sure as I want 'em to. A scrap'd be rather fun, eh, Hal? A scrap all to ourselves out here, before our fellows get an innings. You see, very soon there won't be any of the Turks or Arabs to have a sling at. They'll be mopped up by the British forces. So it'd be a pity to lose the opportunity."

Hal looked at him queerly. It was, perhaps, only

natural that the somewhat youthful middy should be imbued with that opinion. The smashing of every enemy had become a tradition long since with the navy. Odds were laughed at, dangers and difficulties brushed aside, and how often had officers and men of the Royal Navy had doubts whether, on leaving home shores for active service, they would arrive before the enemy was vanquished—vanquished, let us add, in the most dashing, the most gentlemanly, the most upright and sporting manner possible? But Hal took a wider view of things. Colonials, like our American cousins, are more advanced than the youth of the United Kingdom. They have seen more, perhaps; they are closer up against Nature and the struggle for existence. Their eyes may be a little wider open. In any case, Hal had no illusions as to the course of the conflict in which Britain was now engaged.

"What! Well, of course, I'm not saying that it wouldn't be fine fun to put up a fight with those fellows," he told his cousin. "And by all that one sees, it's more than likely to come off. It'll be a teaser, too, old son, and will give you a stomachful of fighting. As to our chaps not getting much of a chance, don't you believe it. This rising of the Turks is not an arrangement of to-day or to-morrow. It's not a sudden sort of business. It's premeditated, all part of a huge plan, the dear Kaiser's plan, who's been clever enough to fool the Young Turk party. Ever go in for politics, Dereck?"

"Oh, well, just a little. But that sort of stuff's never bothered me much. Besides, I've had such a heap of other things to digest, don't you know,"

the lordly middy responded: "navigation, and so on. Awful stuff, with such heaps of figures that you begin to wonder whether you're to turn out a mathematician or a sailor. Give us the yarn. Those chaps are coming nearer very slowly. Perhaps they're afraid of walking into an ambush. What's this about the Kaiser?"

"Far too big a thing to talk over here," Hal told him. "You should get Claude on to the job. He'll spout for hours. But this I can tell you. The Kaiser—the Prussian Hohenzollern who has fostered the biggest army ever contemplated, and has raised a navy second to that of the British—the apostle of culture, who invaded Belgium and set that culture free till civilians, women, and children had been brutally butchered—well, he's had a bee in his bonnet for years past. He ain't satisfied with Germany and German colonies. He's like our dear little friend, Oliver Twist. He wants more, and means to have it. So he's been scheming, as you know, and amongst his schemes has been the fixed idea that, besides having an outlet into the North Sea, he must have access to the Mediterranean.

"Well, Turkey's there, sitting on both sides of the Dardanelles—Turkey in Europe and Turkey in Asia. There are certain small Balkan States in between. Good! There the whole scheme comes in. Crush France, secure Belgium for your own, and with Calais and other ports in your grip discover yourself within easy striking distance of England. Then smash Russia, and what have you left? Merely the Balkan States. You brush them aside, for Turkey is your

ally and helps to the south. Then there you are, with access to the Mediterranean!"

"But the Turk?" asked Dereck. "There's the Turk. He might object."

"He would, then, most certainly," said Hal dryly. "But it would be too late. Germany's simply fooling the Turk. If she were successful in this gigantic war the Turk would be kicked out of Europe, and would remain only as a shattered name and nation in Asia. German influence in Asia would become a great deal more than mere influence. She would seize all Turkish possessions, and would soon possess herself of Persia. Then, supposing Greece and Bulgaria, Serbia and Rumania to have been defeated, there would be Italy alone left. Well, she'd be isolated, opposed to tremendous odds, for Germany would certainly impress the soldiers of the nations she conquered. So Italy would go by the board, and England would be left to fight alone for her very life's blood. Halloo! They're coming along fast. They're on a strong scent. Suppose they must know that we ain't Arabs."

"Can't help themselves," Dereck answered. "Even in this soft sand our boots must leave a characteristic impression. What sort of action will they take, I wonder?"

That was a question which none of the five could answer. It was one of the trying uncertainties left to the future. But of this there was no doubt whatever: the twelve men approaching the oasis were Arabs, with one single exception, for one of the men, mounted on a camel, wore a helmet. Its dull, khaki-cloth cover showed up sometimes against the flowing white robes

of the Arabs in company, though at other times it merged wonderfully with the sandy desert. That the twelve were making direct for the oasis, too, there was little doubt; and, indeed, the one who had dismounted having now climbed on to his camel, the whole troop came forward at a pace which soon reduced the distance between them and the object for which they were making.

From his perch in the palm tree Hal watched them closely, calling down information to his comrades, while Dereck slid rapidly down the trunk of the tree and hid himself in the hollow prepared for him. The four who were posted on terra firma had, in fact, taken up what might be termed first-class tactical positions. They were separated from one another by a matter of some twenty yards only, for the clump of trees was a small one. Thus, they were within easy call of one another. For the rest, Claude faced the direction from which the enemy were coming, while Jack looked towards the ridge beyond which the sea lay. Dereck watched the north, lying flat in a shallow trench which just accommodated him, and having Alphonse as a near neighbour. The fourth side of their camp was in the hands of Hal, who, as a matter of fact, was able to see in all directions. As to being seen, the young Australian up aloft was able to assure his friends that they were practically invisible.

"So long as you keep within the margin of grass they'll not see you unless they come right into the encampment," he sang out. "Now keep low. They'll top that hillock soon, or ride round it. I can see 'em jabbering away like anything."

It may have been five minutes later when the band of twelve men rode into view and halted. They were now within comparatively easy shot of our friends; so much so that Dereck laid his sights on them, aiming over the spot where Claude was hidden. Then, carefully seeing that his lock was at "safety", he lay down close into the bottom of the trench he occupied, and watched and waited.

"Bothered, evidently," he thought. "Having a great big powwow. It'll take them some time to decide how many of us there are here, and who we are and where we come from. Then—then I suppose from guessing they'll get more curious, and will come right in."

As a matter of fact, the Arabs were not nearly so ignorant as the middy had imagined; nor had they been spending all their wandering lives in this desert region for nothing. Indeed, your Arab in his own way is not unlike a Red Indian. He is Nature's child, in close touch with her always. Towns and cities are, often enough, things that he loathes excessively, while the silence and loneliness of the desert call to him. More than that, like the countryman the world over, he is quick to detect signs and sounds, quick to follow a trail whatever or whoever may have caused it, and quicker still in the art of deduction. Those many footprints had quickly caught the eye of at least eleven of the approaching party, and at once had caused them to halt in a hurry.

"Then what? By Allah, but have others been here before us?" asked one of them, a stately figure, whose white beard descended far over his *burnous*. "Where,

too, is the one whom we left to watch the coast for us? He was to have reported whether the infidels' boats had passed up through the water, and whether any landing had been attempted. Where is he?"

A man at his elbow, a tall, unusually lanky Arab, slipped from his camel and faced this leader, for leader he was without a doubt. Standing there, he answered in a voice which, by contrast with the usual deep, musical sound of an Arab's voice, was disagreeably high-pitched and squeaky.

"The man, chief," he said—"one known as the shepherd—there is no sign of him as yet. But he should have signalled from the top of the trees yonder. That was the agreement between us. He has gone away, perhaps, or is captured——"

"Or is dead. Man, cannot I see all that of which you are speaking? But the footprints, they are not of Arabs, eh? Then, by Allah, who has made them? enemies or friends? the new soldiers of the Sultan, or——"

The man who had slid to the ground to inspect the marks in the sand upon which the party had stumbled, and who in his haste had not waited to allow his camel to kneel for him, now lifted his head and gave a sharp glance at his chief. Then, as if he were a dog, he ran along the sand peering at every mark he came to. Sometimes he halted for a few seconds and stirred the sand with the point of a murderous-looking weapon which he had drawn from his belt. Then on he went again, till he was quite a distance from the party. His deep-set eyes were ablaze with interest and excitement, his hawk-like nose was thrust almost

into the many depressions. Then he returned to the party, and, not waiting to make an explanation, called sharply to his camel. The beast knelt, and at once the man clambered into his saddle. A word, a sharp kick with his heel, and he was being borne at a fast pace toward the ridge beyond which lay the ocean. There he halted his camel again and slid to the sand.

"Having a look round to see where we landed," Hal called gently to his comrades. "Yes, and he's spotted the place where Alphonse bagged the fellow who tried to shoot him. He's standing by the grave now. He'll have the whole tale complete by the time he gets back to his party."

That, in fact, was precisely what happened. This inquisitive fellow returned to his friends quickly, and drew up beside the chief of the party.

"Then you have a tale?" asked the old man, who looked wonderfully hale and hearty in spite of his white beard. "You have read the story hidden in the sands, and can tell us of this shepherd and of what has happened? Speak, and say, if enemies have landed, are they still here for us to strangle?"

He was indeed a pleasant old gentleman! As he spoke his sinister eyes shone remarkably, and flashed in a manner which promised a somewhat difficult time for our heroes.

"Speak," he commanded again peremptorily, "but slowly, so that his Excellency of Germany can understand the words you are uttering."

He beckoned to a man riding at his elbow to come a little closer—beckoned in a manner which was at

once contemptuous and imperious. And thereupon he turned his back upon him, and frowned at the one who had gone off to read the signs that Dereck and his companions had left in every direction. As for the one he had beckoned, the man in a pith helmet, he urged his camel forward with a savage kick, scowling and muttering. A short, broad-shouldered, ugly fellow he appeared to be, with a broad, flabby face in which a pair of rather prominent eyes were set too close together. A stubbly, fair moustache adorned a short upper lip, and a wide, thick-lipped mouth lay beneath it, a mouth perpetually showing two rows of irregular teeth, which by contrast with the splendid examples displayed by the Arabs were fang-like, stained, and yellow. Elevating the glasses which he had borrowed from Claude, Alphonse turned them upon this individual and at once changed colour.

"What! That man!" he cried. "Treachery!"

"Eh? What's that?" demanded Dereck. "What's the row about?"

But Alphonse only shook his head and kept silence. A minute later he called softly to his friends.

"Keep low and do not show so much as a finger. Let them imagine the camp is vacant," he said. "Watch them. Let them be the first to show what is going to happen. Our game is to take them by surprise if possible, for if they can secure us not one of us will live to tell the tale later. Ah! On they come at a trot. Down, you fellows!"

CHAPTER V

Otto Scholz, Traitor

WHY had Alphonse Albone changed colour so suddenly after looking through Claude's glasses, and why had he snapped the latter into their case with such a show of anger? It was something foreign to the cool, rather slow young Frenchman, something quite unlike him. Dereck was still wondering, as he lay at the bottom of his trench, peering through the blades of grass at the party of Arabs riding their camels toward the oasis.

Meanwhile it may be wondered what sort of tale that single Arab who had searched the sands so carefully had had to give to his leader. The old man, his eyes flashing vengefully, his brows contracting beneath the folds of his turban, and his lips curling as he turned from the man in the pith helmet to whom he had spoken, now beckoned the sleuth-hound nearer.

"Speak!" he cried again imperiously, "and slowly, so that this infidel German may understand. Now!"

"Then, glory be to Allah! there is killing to be done," declared the man, thrusting his hooky nose upward toward his chief. "There are white men here. These marks I have followed were caused by men other than the new soldiers of the Sultan. They,

we know, wear leather boots now, and one need not question their wisdom. They are Turks, not Arabs."

"So. It is true. Arabs have ever despised the clothing of Western peoples. But the new party in Constantinople — the Young Turks, as they style themselves—ape all that is Western. Proceed. How do you know that these prints are not the steps of the newly-equipped soldiers of the Sultan?"

"Thus. The boot-marks are different—one wide and flat, almost heelless; another long and thin, and with a deep heel depression. All five are of different shapes and weights and makes."

"Five?"

"Five, chief."

"By Allah! Then only five! We shall flay them before the evening."

The chief bubbled into his beard and chortled with merriment, while his sinister old eyes flashed in that most unpleasant manner. "You can understand what he says, this man?" he asked suddenly, turning upon the one in the pith helmet whom he had described as German—the ugly, squat, broad-faced and narrow-eyed little fellow.

"I do," came the answer, in halting Arabic. "He said there are five people who are not Turks. But—but before you speak of flaying them, it would be as well to make sure that they are enemies. Supposing that they are people of my country—Germans?"

There was silence for a while. Then the chief turned slowly upon the last speaker, turned upon him an unruffled countenance from which those wonderfully wicked eyes of his shone cruelly. Germany

might be allied with these Arabs, seeing that they were allies of the Turks; but a chief need not soil his hands with one whom he deemed contemptible, with an infidel dog, with one whom he regarded as a traitor. After all, your Arab, be he bad or good, is a man who respects himself, and is true to certain principles. He is either for you or against you. If he has taken money from you for some purpose which he is to accomplish, he will surely accomplish that purpose. He will not eat salt at your table and take favours from your hand while he is plotting with another employer to slay you. No, he will kill you, kill you very thoroughly and completely, if he is minded to do so, with a cruelty which may easily be astounding, but you will not be unwarned. You will have known him to be your enemy. He will not have been that cunning snake, the traitor, who sleeps at your feet and rises in the night to murder the one who has favoured him.

"Of your country, Germans!" the old chief repeated, while his nostrils dilated with passion, a passion which good breeding forbade his showing to this infidel riding in his company. "You think t at these five might be your own blood brothers. But, by Allah, how could that be so, seeing that they came from the sea? At least, that is what I imagine."

"That is so, chief. They were washed ashore during that storm some days ago. There are the remains of the boat upon the beach, a native boat from the place where the land is cut away and the big ships sail across it."

"From the Canal, from Port Said!" exclaimed the

German, his eyes dilating a little. "But, chief, why not my people?"

The thin, highly curved lips of the old man curled contemptuously. At a guess, one would have said that if he were helping in the war against Great Britain, France, and Russia, he certainly execrated the men who had induced the Turks to side with them. Moreover, though he roamed the sandy wastes of Palestine, and often enough rode far into the desert of Sinai, the old man was not devoid of information. He could and did keep in touch with some of the many events of his time, and knew approximately what was happening. He smiled sweetly, though his eyes were half veiled by his long lashes, as if to hide his real feelings.

"But," he said slowly, "but—your people! Surely not, for the tale is told that Germany has disappeared from the oceans. If it be true, then the ships of this Kaiser whom you call Emperor have gone from the Mediterranean. Then how can men of German birth be cast up upon the coast of Palestine? No, that cannot be so. There are few who come as you do, from the heart of Egypt, from the camp of the enemy, who come and go almost as you please, and who earn money by doing so."

The proud lips curved again, the alæ of the nostrils dilated. Those cruel eyes shot a glance at the German which made him change colour. Indeed, the uncouth fellow wearing the pith helmet swore beneath his breath and chewed his stubbly moustache angrily.

"Then proceed," commanded the chief of his follower. "There were five men, enemies."

"Enemies. Yes, the signs are there. They were exhausted. Our watchman the shepherd would have slain them. He fired his weapon. One heard. One perhaps was hit, though there is no evidence of that happening. Then this one fell upon the shepherd."

"Ah! and slew him. The fool! How came he to allow that?"

"It is written in the sand," the man answered. "They closed together and fought for the mastery. The shepherd was beaten. The other thrust a dagger into his body. Then he buried the shepherd."

"And later?"

"Later, chief, he fetched his four comrades, and they crossed to the oasis. For days they were there. The marks show it. Now—perhaps a ship has taken them off, for there is no saying. Perhaps they are still in the oasis. But surely they are enemies—enemies who should be slain if they are still with us."

"But—but," it was the German who was speaking again, "they were white men, then, these strangers whom you style enemies?"

"Of a surety," came the answer. "The marks spell it plainly. They came from across the sea. They were of the race of British, all save one, the one with the long, pointed boots. He was of the Franks, also our enemies."

"Then—then kill them certainly," cried the German. "Kill them as soon as may be. From Port Said, you said? Now, supposing——"

Supposing what? Supposing he should discover amongst the five who had been cast upon this coast,

these five enemies of Germany, some whom he knew in Port Said and Egypt. Supposing, just for the mere sake of argument, he knew them, and what was more important, they knew him, then——

"They must be killed, every one of them," he told himself with a growl. "If not, what happens? They see me perhaps. Then my return to Egypt is filled with danger. I may be recognized and denounced. I can no longer get this information which is worth gold to me. Ah! And supposing that young rascal were one of the five. Pooh! He hasn't ever had the courage even for a short expedition."

But supposing by that young rascal this ugly Teuton meant the lank, tall, ungainly Alphonse, the "mother's darling" whom Dereck and his chums knew by now to be a sterling good fellow, and it happened to turn out that Alphonse Albone's family had a skeleton in its domestic cupboard, a fat, short, broad, ugly-faced skeleton in the shape of one Otto Scholz, a German of the Germans, whose widowed mother had married into the Albone family, and dying shortly after, had left the said ugly and deceitful Otto Scholz as a legacy to the family! That indeed was the inner history of the house of Albone. Long years ago Alphonse's father had betaken himself to Alexandria, and from there had built up a considerable export business, so much so that he had to open a branch at Port Said. What more natural than that he should appoint his brother as manager?—the brother who had wedded the widow of Herman Scholz, of Bremen. We have said sufficient if we say that Otto Scholz was a boy of nineteen, a young

man indeed, when his mother married into the family of Albone; and if we add that though he remained in Egypt, and indeed helped Alphonse's father for some time with the business, yet he was always a German of the Germans, one of those sly, cunning fellows who, though clever enough, never quite contrived to hoodwink all his friends and acquaintances.

For instance, there were many of British birth at Port Said and in and around Cairo and Alexandria who considered in their easygoing way that Otto Scholz was as British as the British. He was ugly, uncouth, and all the rest of it, but that was beyond his help. But Alphonse could have told you a little tale of his cousin's schemes, of his dishonesty, of his thieving, of his double-dealing. Alphonse had indeed warned the British at the very commencement of this world-wide war, which had upset Egypt like other countries. But Otto was naturalized. He had his papers to show it. He hated the Germans! Certainly, he had the greatest contempt for them, and—and he was a double-dyed traitor. He was helping the enemy. Alphonse had suspected that many a time. Here was direct evidence of it.

"Kill them all. White men, eh? From Port Said? Certainly, let us kill them quickly," the ugly, scowling Otto exclaimed, as he sat his camel beside the chief and stared across at the clump beneath which Dereck and his chums were hiding. "There are twelve of us here, twelve good men and true. Can twelve men not accomplish the death of five British?"

The old chief gazed silently and for quite a while at the oasis shimmering there, a delightfully green

spot in the centre of this arid desert, gazed and frowned, and let those expressive lips of his curl as he presented his back to Otto Scholz. It irked the aged chief to consort with such an one. If he had had his way he would have placed a bowstring round his neck and strangled him.

"Strangle him slowly," he was telling himself, while his eyes flashed and shone, though to look at his proud features you would have thought that such a terrible act as the strangulation of the German was the very last thing he would have imagined. But for those flashing eyes and the proud lips, this chief looked quite a venerable, gentle fellow. But then, what man of the East allows his features to betray his thoughts? Who can read in the face of an Arab that of which he is dreaming? Certainly the treacherous Otto, with his shallow nature and understanding, could not do so. He only could appreciate the fact that these five men from the Canal zone must be British or allied to the British, and that they must for that single reason be exterminated. For otherwise they might render his own position dangerous. They might recognize him. They might even be amongst the many acquaintances he had in Egypt, easygoing acquaintances who put up with Otto Scholz because quarrelling was such a bother.

The danger was that they might stumble up against him when he returned once more to pick up information, the information for which Germany and the Turks paid him. Not, let us add, that money was the sole attraction. Otto could be as mercenary as any, but solid gold was not the only reward he aimed

at. No. Otto was a party to the general conspiracy, a party to the scheme fostered through many years by those in authority in Germany, secretly fostered by the Berlin Foreign Office, encouraged by princes and rulers, enthusiastically adopted by sedate and learned professors, and taught to the uninitiated throughout German possessions and the Fatherland, taught indeed in her schools once her sons and daughters had advanced beyond infancy.

Truly, it was a magnificent scheme, which made of every German an ally of Germany, though he sailed under the colours of any other nationality, though he had become naturalized and had sworn allegiance to any of the neighbouring nations and their rulers—a scheme which encouraged German settlers to leave the Fatherland and settle, let us say, in England, and gave them such good advice as to their manners that they were all that one might have hoped of them. Friendly to a degree, liberal and even helpful, they were, in short, quite acceptable neighbours, who disarmed any suspicion there might have been in the minds of those stupid, easygoing English, and, playing their cards after the advice and teaching of those learned professors and others in the Fatherland, became violently British, British of the British—till the great day of war arrived, till the Kaiser and his people were ready, till the hour had come for Germany to strike for the dominion of the whole world, for the sovereignty of every habitable corner of the globe.

Then—but not till then—could the settlers, the emigrants, be of service. They had merely been

paving the way before, merely gathering information from amongst the friendly people with whom they were living—the stupid, unsuspecting fools who had given them such a warm welcome once their suspicions were allayed. They had been useful to the Fatherland only because of the information which they had steadily sent to the Intelligence Department of the German War Office, information long since ticketed and docketed after the methodical ways of the Teuton, and, if need be, closely investigated. But war would bring to fruition that scheme which had sent them abroad, which had made of almost all of them potential traitors to their adopted countries.

War had, in fact, produced a crop of odious spies and traitors. Britain was infested with them. France had had her share, and had discovered them and shot them wholesale. Russia had found them in many a household, sneaking behind her lines, in the trenches her soldiers occupied—and she had dealt with them in a manner one may imagine. But in Britain and in the numerous British possessions they still existed, still went their way in many cases unmolested, still sought for closely-guarded secrets, and still, in spite of naturalization, in spite of their professions, were absolutely Germans, ready to help the enemy, ready to be traitors, only, in fact, lacking for the moment the opportunity to carry out some treacherous purpose.

And Egypt had her share. Otto Scholz was one of them, one of the potential traitors; eager to earn gold, it is true, but still more eager to lend his aid to bring that gigantic scheme to fruition, the scheme which Germany had elaborated for so many years, for which

she had made such gigantic efforts; eager to see the country of his adoption ruined and broken beneath the heel of the country which had borne him.

Bah! Every decent-minded man throughout the globe must by now be tired of hearing of Germany's duplicity and cunning, of Germany's treachery—a treachery that matches well with the extraordinary violence she has displayed in every field of the European hostilities, which has caused those in authority to set hordes of her soldiers to kill and maltreat non-combatants, which has made of her navy a mere engine of piracy, and which has revolted from no breach of the international rules of warfare —not even from the employment of poison and the most up-to-date methods of asphyxiation. So much for culture. So much for those who would rule the nations. So much for that unrighteous scheme, that cunning, clever preparation which overreached itself by its very cleverness.

It produced an abundance of treacherous people, men and women. It had produced amongst them the ugly, uncouth Otto Scholz, and cast him as a legacy, an unwelcome legacy, upon the family of Albone, a double-dyed traitor. He aped the British, liked to be thought British, was pleased when one mistook him for one of our nation—and yet he was a rascal who plotted with those millions of other subjects of the Kaiser to overthrow Britain, who was prepared to bite the hand which had fed him; was ready, indeed, to bring about Germany's triumph by whatever means and at whatever cost to the nation of his adoption.

The old chief's eyes flashed. "A bowstring, yes,"

he was saying to himself; "a bowstring with which to encircle his neck, and then but slow twisting, till his eyes bulge, till his mouth is agape, till his tongue is thrust into the sunlight. That for traitors, whether they be those who are on our side, or those against us. As for these infidel Germans, it passes my understanding how the Turks can have made such friends of them. Are they of the salt of the earth then? Are they of greater honour than those who sit in Egypt and guard the streak of water which passes east from the Mediterranean? Of a surety I, who am old and have met both Frank and British, I can see that in those men there is breeding. They stand well before their fellows. They are clean of limb and of fine figure, and, moreover, their deeds have been gallant and honourable. But these Germans, who come only as traders and then appear as soldiers masquerading, these often fat, ungainly people—nay! they are not of the earth's salt. This man at my elbow is but a sample of them."

He swung round to look at the German, to regard him with a cold, glittering gaze.

"Kill them, all five, yes," he said. "If they are there. If they are still within the oasis. But—they may have sailed. It is their friends who guard the seas and hold them."

Otto allowed the gibe to pass apparently unnoticed. He was staring hard at the oasis, and suddenly started.

"I saw a flash," he said, "as if someone had raised a pair of glasses on the lenses of which the sun shone. See! they are there."

"Yet perhaps they are not," replied the chief, when

he had gazed in that direction for some five minutes. "Mayhap they lie hidden. Mayhap they are gone. None can say till they have tested by entering the oasis."

"And that you will do. There are twelve of us here, twelve against five," said Otto. "Surely twelve men need have no fear?"

"Fear? Does an Arab fear death then?" asked the chief disdainfully. "He has one life here, infidel, and is ready to yield it if may be, if there be need. And yet that life he is bidden to guard as something of value. Twelve men, then, may advance boldly upon an oasis held by but five, provided that those twelve know without shadow of doubt that the five are before them. But supposing them to be there, lying hidden, then of the twelve many may fall by walking into an ambush. It is a case for reconnoitring. It is an occasion when one may advance to see what is to be seen and report it to his comrades. Or, if Allah will it not in that way, then the fire which kills this one who advances gives all information to his comrades. Here, O infidel, is an opportunity for you who caught just now a flash from the oasis, and who so greatly desire the deaths of these men. Advance, then! We will await the issue."

He fixed his eyes upon the shifting orbs of the German and sat watching him carefully, without a movement, save that those proud lips were curling, the brows just beneath the turban elevated a little, and the fingers of his right hand—delicate, shapely fingers, of which the nails were polished—toyed with the long white beard dangling upon his *burnous*.

And Otto winced. He cast his eyes to the ground, upon the ugly head of his camel, toward the oasis, anywhere rather than at the piercing orbs which regarded him. Those yellow teeth of his began again to knaw at the ends of his ugly, stubbly moustache, while his hands were thrust deep into his pockets, where, hidden from view, the short, stumpy, ill-kept fingers were clenched to his palms. Otto looked ill at ease, anything but a firebrand. "But——" he began.

"But, you will say, O infidel," said the chief, "but this is the work of your escort, it is the work of men, of those to whom fighting comes as if by nature. Good! See, I will go. If there are men within the oasis, mayhap I shall return with the news. Mayhap I shall remain in friendly converse with them, for perchance they may be of your country. If not, then Allah may will it that I shall rest there for a while. Farewell and greetings!"

He jerked at the silken rope attached to the head of his camel, and set the grunting brute in motion. Then, without so much as a glance over his shoulder or to either side, without even deigning to draw a weapon, he rode slowly toward the oasis, a fine figure of a man, his white beard blowing out at either side in long wisps, his clothing showing vividly in the sunlight.

"Below there! One of 'em coming along to investigate matters," sang out Hal. "What'll we do?"

"Lie doggo!" Dereck called back on the instant.

"Don't move so much as a finger. Just watch him and let him pass through. If he fires, don't

return the shot, unless he actually fires at one of us. If he wants to make a close inspection, then jump on him and pull him down amongst us. Steady, you fellows! An Arab wants a whole heap of deceiving."

It was Alphonse who had spoken—Alphonse, whom Hal could not see even from that lofty elevation, and in spite of the Arab dress which the Frenchman continued to wear. For Claude had come forward with a suggestion.

"A fellow looking very carefully here might see us," he said, "especially if he rode almost over us. I vote we pluck as much grass as possible and sprinkle it over our bodies, only we mustn't pluck it all from one spot."

In the end they had found it better for Dereck to creep from his trench and cover his comrades. Then he slid back to his own hiding-place with an armful, and managed to scatter grass over his own person. And now the old chief was advancing boldly and serenely toward them.

"Could bowl him over as neat as a whistle," Hal told himself, levelling his rifle and fixing the sights on the advancing Arab. "But that would be rank stupidity. We've got to puzzle these fellows. Perhaps, even, they will ride away without venturing nearer."

But Hal did not know the minds nor the ways of the denizens of these ancient deserts—habits, indeed, ingrained in them, unaltered for centuries, the same in this twentieth century as their forefathers had exhibited in those days, so far off, before the Romans invaded the country, when Egypt herself was the

invader. Honourable in his own way, cunning and crafty as may be, fighting is the natural habit of your nomad Arab. And when he fights he fights to slay his enemies, to exterminate them; he fights with a ferocity which is calculated, and which may well terrorize those who have to withstand him. A finer figure of a soldier, and a wilder, one could not imagine, and, indeed, the old chief advancing toward the oasis would have claimed the admiration of anyone. Seated upright, his beard flowing, he rode with the carriage of a young man, his brown legs showing conspicuously against the milk-white sides of the camel. Had he been on a horse, no doubt his appearance would have been even more fascinating. But even now, on an ungainly, ugly camel, he was a picture.

"Plucky, ain't he?" called out Dereck. "The old boy looks as if he were going to ride into the centre of the oasis. What then?"

"Not a move," called Claude cautiously.

"Even if he fires at some imaginary object," added Alphonse. "But, of course, if he gets nasty—and Arabs can, that's gospel—then we'll have to shoot him down or jump on him. Lie low, you fellows!"

Barely able to follow the movements of the chief, the four lay as close to the bottom of their trenches as was possible, while Hal was splendidly hidden at the top of the palm tree he had mounted. Slowly the Arab came forward, as if such a thing as a rifle did not exist, as if, indeed, there could be no danger. His fine old face showed not a trace of fear, not an inkling of his inner feelings. But those deep-sunk eyes sparkled and flashed, while nothing escaped his

observation. As for his comrades, they remained out in the glare of the desert, watching his retreating figure listlessly, fingering their rifles, and ready at any moment to spring into action. Then the chief tugged at the head-cord of his mount and brought the beast to a halt at the edge of the shadows cast by the trees in this delightful oasis. For a while he remained there, peering at the two broad patches of grass, at the gaudily-painted tent, which Dereck and his friends had not altered in the slightest, and at every other visible object.

"Not a sign of the infidels," he told himself, "but there is an uncanny stillness about the place—a something which seems to speak of their presence. See, there are goats within the oasis, and they stand bunched together as if they had been driven into that position. Good! It is a sign. I will ride forward."

He jerked the head-cord again and rode on placidly into the very centre of the oasis, where he brought his mount to a halt again, and spent some three minutes in staring in all directions. But still he could see nothing to tell him that these five enemies were present. Not a head showed, not a blade of grass moved; there was no sound by which he could detect them. Yet he felt sure that they were there, able to shoot on the instant.

"Listen, ye infidels," he said of a sudden, speaking the words as if he were entering upon a conversation, his voice not raised in the least, yet deep, sonorous, melodious, the voice of the desert. "Listen while I address ye. For ye are here, within a stone's cast of me, and even as I speak your ears are open and your

eyes watching. I am here to give a command. Come forth, ye who have invaded the country of the Sultan. Hand yourselves over to the keeping of my men and ye shall die the death of soldiers. But hide still, be deaf to the words that I am speaking—then ye shall perish as should all infidels. Ye shall die before the sun is down, die painfully."

He turned his proud face to all sides of the compass and waited for an answer. Then, his eyes flashing, his head held proudly erect, he set his camel in motion and rode slowly from the oasis.

"A very unpleasant, if a proud and well-born individual," said Alphonse when he had gone, rapidly repeating the words to his comrades. "Which would you fellows prefer? The easy, nice sort of death given to a soldier, or a lingering end, a painful one, the sort of thing he only hinted at?"

Lifting his head from the trench he actually grinned at Dereck and at Claude and Jack, grinned a little nervously.

"Whatever sort it is won't matter when it's done with," the middy told them quickly. "I'm going to fight it out. No handing myself over, if you please, without making some sort of a fight of it."

"Hear, hear!" from Claude.

"And them's my sentiments," came from the sailor.

"Below there!" Hal called at this moment. "Look out! The old boy sent his camel ahead and waved to his men. They've joined him. They've turned in this direction. They're coming along at a regular gallop!"

CHAPTER VI

An Attack in Force

GALLOP was hardly the correct term to apply to the method of approach of the Arab chief and his party as they dashed toward the oasis in which Dereck and his friends were hidden. Do camels gallop, one may ask? They lumber along, their feet thrown out, their bodies rocking in a manner which requires no little skill and practice on the part of their riders if they would maintain their positions. And some lumber slowly. The majority do, in fact, though the faster riding-camel is a beast which can make quite rapid progress. Of this class were those mounted by the twelve bearing down to attack our friends. Keeping close together, the riders sitting forward and waving their weapons, the whole party came like a rocket toward the oasis. Then they separated a little, urged their beasts into line, and at a shout from the fierce old chief opened a heavy fire on the encampment.

"Below there!" called Hal. "Shall I open the ball this side and give 'em pepper?"

"No. Leave it to us," Dereck called back. "Pot 'em as they bolt. If they don't run, then you can join in. Now, Alphonse, let into 'em with that rifle you took from the Arab. I'll give 'em a taste of this one.

The others have revolvers for closer business. Fire!"

A man on the extreme left of the party charging down upon them rolled backward and dropped to the sand, where he clawed the ground for a few seconds. Then, sitting up with a huge effort, he levelled his weapon and discharged it, bringing a yell from one of the band now still nearer the oasis. Indeed, in his dying efforts this Arab had contrived to damage his own party, for one of the camels stopped suddenly, planting its feet ahead and so tossing its rider. Then it swayed from side to side, groaning and grunting dismally, and finally fell heavily.

"One to me," said Dereck, and Claude noticed that his cousin spoke with icy coolness. "Did you bag the other fellow, Alphonse?"

"Missed!" came the disgusted exclamation. "This time I'll make better shooting. How's that?"

A third man fell, his camel still continuing to plunge onward, while the rifles of the Arabs never ceased to flash. Then one of them could be seen making frantic exertions. It was the man in the pith helmet. Dereck lifted his rifle and covered him with the sights. Then he swung the weapon round and discharged it at another of the enemy. For the man with the pith helmet had now succeeded in pulling his mount up, and was riding toward the open.

"The man with the pith helmet, look!" shouted Alphonse, rising from his trench to kneel up on both knees and point.

"Then pot him!" bellowed Dereck, beginning to show some trace of excitement. "Here, let me have a go!"

"Stop! Not at him, brute and traitor that he is," answered Alphonse, frantically waving at Dereck. "Not at him, if you please, my friend. I can't explain now. I'll tell you later. The fellow's a scoundrel, but for all that I cannot be a party to bringing about his death. Ah! That hit one of them."

The bullet which the Frenchman had just discharged brought one of the enemy up extremely short by striking his camel in the head, causing the beast to pitch forward with a crash, half-burying its body in the loose sand, while the man himself shot forward on to all fours and went rolling over and over. He made the fourth of the Arabs to lick the dust, but of these two were uninjured, and not to be outdone by their comrades they raced after them with a fleetness of foot which was extraordinary, and, seizing the tail of the nearest camel, were dragged on toward the oasis.

As for Otto Scholz, he and his camel were now well out in the desert, where this craven Teuton pulled the beast in and turned to watch at a safe distance the slaying of those who had come from Egypt. And meanwhile the chief sat his mount in the midst of his men, and led them, shouting shrill cries of encouragement and discharging his own rifle.

"Getting to closer quarters, eh?" remarked Claude, turning his head and smiling back at Dereck. "Won't be long before Jack and I get our turn. It was a good idea to place ourselves here between the trunks of the trees, for a fellow can easily see that they will prevent the camels being ridden right in on us. Now, Dereck, fetch 'em another smack with that rifle.

It's they or us, and I've no particular wish to fall into the hands of that old chief and his cut-throats."

The middy was even then kneeling on one knee and sighting his weapon. For a while he let it turn toward the chief of the Arabs, and fixed the sights on him. Then he swung it to one side again.

"Game old bird, eh? don't you know," he told Alphonse in his old lordly manner. "White hair and beard and all that, Alphonse. Can't shoot him down. It'd be murder. I'll wait till he gets a trifle nearer, and then try to bring his camel down."

If only the middy had known what a fiery old tiger he had to deal with, and what little mercy he and his friends might expect from this venerable Arab! But then, the chief's well-bred and haughty face hid his real nature and feelings. Who was to anticipate even cruelty on the part of such a grey-beard? Bang! Dereck's rifle went off with a snap, and Claude turned and grinned at him.

"You'll have the whole jolly lot on top of us if you don't shoot better," he sang out. "Steady, man! We don't want 'em to be in strength enough to rush us. There are seven of 'em left, and they've still a hundred and fifty yards to do. Smack in at 'em!"

Alphonse's rifle spoke next, with a sound which told plainly of its bigger calibre. But again nothing happened, and still those seven men came on, mounted on their lumbering camels, while the two who had been dismounted were dragged immediately behind. Dereck pulled himself together, while Claude signalled and shouted to Hal.

"Get in at 'em, boy," he called. "There's no use

in reserving our fire. Jack, when they get to close quarters you hop in behind that tree. I'll take the one next to it. Then rake 'em with your shooter. Ah! That's knocked one of 'em out, only the fool of a camel is bringing the chap behind on with him as if nothing had happened."

A lucky shot on the middy's part had sent one of the Arabs rolling to the sand, but as Claude remarked —remarked, too, with no little excitement, for the matter was beginning to wear a serious aspect—the camel which had carried him came on without a halt, dragging behind him the man who had seized his tail. And this pleasant individual was at that precise moment clinging by the fingers of one hand, while with the other he drew a formidable curved weapon and placed the blade across his mouth. Alphonse put his sights on him, gave a little allowance forward to make up for the movement, and pulled his trigger.

"Good for you!" shouted Claude. "Pulled him down nicely. Ah! There goes Hal, and—and that ends the matter."

By then he and Jack were standing behind the trees they had selected, ready to face the rush of the enemy, for barely seventy yards separated them from the edge of the oasis. Indeed, it looked as if a very few seconds later would see the four who had taken up their position down below assailed by what was left of the Arab party. Just then, however, Alphonse made that lucky shot, causing the man dragging at the tail of the riderless camel to pitch heavily forward and lie still and motionless. An instant later Hal's weapon spoke, to be followed within a moment by the

fall of another camel. That, indeed, brought an end to the charge, for on this occasion it was the proud chief of the party who had been thrown violently from his saddle. At the sight, those of his followers who still remained turned their camels and went off hurriedly, while the man still dragging at the tail of one of them let go his hold, and went racing off as if a dozen demons were behind him.

"And so that is the end of the business," reflected Dereck, feeling particularly happy.

"Yes," said Alphonse, "for the moment. Like fighting, Dereck?"

"Well, I hardly know," came the frank avowal. "I'll be honest. There was a time, at the very beginning — er—don't you know, when I felt in a dickens of a funk, felt like bolting. Then — well, then, somehow the thing came natural. I knew we were fighting for our lives, and that seemed to fix me and calm me. Helloo! Why, that chap is an old sportsman."

He referred to the chief of the Arabs. The tumble which he had had so recently had stunned the old fellow, and for a while he had lain quite senseless and without a movement. But now he rolled over, stared at the sky with eyes which were dreamy, and then of a sudden sat up and sent a flashing glance at the retreating figures of his followers.

"So! That is their courage!" he told himself bitterly. "They charge to a certain point, till there are more of them still than there are of the hidden enemy. Then they turn tail and run. Of a truth, Allah has served me but ill in giving me such com-

rades. And there are still these five infidels to deal with, and I—I am within distance of their weapons."

He turned his fiery glance now upon the oasis and upon the figures he could see moving there. It seemed plain to this venerable and spirited Arab that the enemy were merely playing with him, were merely waiting for him to revive and stand to his feet, when they would, in Arab fashion, shoot him down.

"It is, then, the will of Allah," he said softly, his eyes flaming as he turned them again to the fleeing figures of his own party. "It is the call at last, the one for which I have waited these many years. It is the final call, and it shall find me ready. One little moment, ye infidels, one little space in which an old man may gather his breath and strength. Then shall they see how one of the Faithful may meet that end which comes to all of us, and to many earlier than in my case. Bah! My head sings. But—but if I rise to my feet it will be better. There, infidels, shoot! Let your bullets pierce my breast. I fear nothing."

But no rifle cracked as he expected, though a figure appeared at the edge of the oasis and watched him. Doubtless the white men there were only toying with him, and at the thought the fierce old warrior's eyes blazed with hatred and indignation.

"So, it is a jest then," he breathed into his beard. "They make sport of one who is sufficiently old to be their father perhaps. It is well that they should learn that one of the Faithful, though aged, may yet be filled with courage; and perchance it may fall out that I shall take one of the infidels with me. Then indeed shall I be blessed in the sight of Allah. Yes,

one little minute more. There, my head is clearer. I see, though stars flash before my eyes. I come, ye infidel, to deal with ye!"

"Game to the very last, eh?" cried Dereck as he watched the aged chief. "Stunned by his fall and deserted by his men, but not beaten. He's loading a pistol, and—and I do believe——"

"He's going to face us all," said Claude, a catch in his voice. "Now, that's something to look at. He's coming slowly towards us, dragging his feet and feeling dizzy. But he means business. Dereck, we shall have the fellow shooting one of us if we're not careful."

"Stop! Lie down in your trenches and leave it to me," said Alphonse, interrupting of a sudden. "If I don't stop him before he gets to close quarters, and supposing he guesses where you are, then dodge behind the trees. If need be, you'll have to shoot him down, though that'd be a pity. Now, I'll slip round the back of the oasis and come out behind him."

He was gone at once, bending low and slipping through the long grass which grew thickly where the trees were. As for Dereck, Jack, and Claude, they dived into their trenches, each gripping a weapon. And though neither of the three wished to do harm to the fiery old chief advancing so deliberately toward them, yet it might be necessary.

"Though a chap would hate to do so," Dereck told himself. "Hah! He's close to the trees now. Why, the old boy is so giddy that he's staggering. But he means business. My! What eyes! They're simply blazing, and—and there's Alphonse!"

The Frenchman appeared of a sudden out in the open, and, getting behind the Arab chief, ran in upon him with a swift, noiseless springing step, and looked as if he would easily achieve his object. But that old man seemed to have an additional sense, seemed to be possessed of an extra pair of eyes indeed, for he could not hear Alphonse's muffled steps. He swung round giddily, gave vent to a shout of fury, and at once discharged his pistol, causing Dereck to hold his breath, and Claude and Jack to spring from their trenches. Indeed, shouts of dismay escaped them, for a gust of wind blowing the smoke aside showed them the figure of the Frenchman full length on the sand.

"Killed!" exclaimed Claude, his voice broken.

"Point-blank shot. Must have—— Why, it ain't nothing of the kind," shouted Jack, darting out from amongst the trees and running in to Alphonse's assistance. For one brief moment had again changed the whole situation. A second earlier it looked as if the old chief had been successful in slaying one of the infidels. The brave if bitter old man was actually chortling as he looked at Alphonse's prone figure. And then the Frenchman was up again upon his feet, even more active than before, and had run in upon the Arab. Seizing the pistol he tore it from the chief's grip, while Jack seized the aged warrior before he could draw a dagger. Then Claude came upon the scene, and between them they bound the hands and feet of their struggling captive.

"Now lie at rest," Alphonse told him severely, when the bonds were firmly if gently twisted; "and

listen to this, Chief. We do not murder. You are a prisoner in our hands, but your life is safe if you have honour. Rest, then, and be content. No harm shall come to you. We swear it."

"And now we'd best be thinking of those others," Dereck told them. "What's to be done? Do you think they'll clear off without more fighting?"

Alphonse looked out into the open desert for a few minutes before he ventured a reply, and watched the figures of the enemy who had retreated. They had now come together again, still within long range of the rifles our friends possessed, but at a distance which made them secure against all but chance shots. And in their centre was Otto Scholz, the renegade German, his pith helmet showing up against the white of the Arabs' clothing.

"He's haranguing them," Alphonse said at last, making use now of the only pair of glasses of which the little party boasted. "You can see that he's doing his best to induce the Arabs to renew the attack. Promising them a reward, no doubt."

"Who? What's all this about?" asked Claude testily. "We asked what was the next likely move on the part of the enemy. You go off into a speech which doesn't refer to them in the least, or, at least, doesn't appear to do so."

"Listen!" Alphonse beckoned Claude and Dereck to him. "I'll tell you something," he said. "You saw that beggar with the pith helmet, the hero who pulled his camel out of the ranks and ran away?"

"Yes. Well?" demanded the middy.

"He's my cousin, that's all."

"Your cousin—that's all! An Arab!"

"Impossible!" declared Claude.

"A German; supposed to be a naturalized Englishman," the Frenchman told them.

"Ah! Supposed to be an Englishman. Naturalized," said Dereck in his lordly way, sniffing disdainfully. "We've had that yarn before. We've come upon Germans who are naturalized Englishmen before this. They know 'em back in England."

"And in New Zealand too," Claude told them quickly. "Scoundrels many of them—traitors."

"Worse," said Dereck. "Not that all are like that. There are a few exceptions, naturally enough, and some of them are as loyal as can be, and have sons serving with our forces. But the majority——"

"Are traitors, pure and simple—sleek, cunning spies," Alphonse growled. "Otto Scholz is one of them, one of the worst, and he's my cousin. You chaps don't want the whole of the tale, I'm sure. A fellow hates to have to produce a family skeleton or to wash his dirty linen in public. But I'll just say this. The family of Albone had no say in the matter—at least, my part of the family hadn't. My uncle married a German woman, a widow. Otto Scholz is her son. He's lived for years in Egypt, and has pretended to be British. But we've had our suspicions of him, and there you are. He's with the enemy. He's a traitor, that's all; and as he must know that we have come from Egypt—for where else could the storm have brought us from?—why, he'll be thinking that unless we are killed we may denounce him."

"So he's haranguing the crowd over there," laughed Dereck, his careless gaiety affecting his friends and brightening them wonderfully. "Well, he's not much of a leader in any case, and seeing that we've thinned their ranks we needn't be scared. But they might send off for reinforcements. That would put us into a hole, eh?"

"Regularly. Right into the soup," the New Zealander admitted. "But we needn't anticipate that till it actually happens. The thing now is to prepare for another rush. Then——"

"Yes, then?" asked Dereck. "Simple, ain't it? Well?"

Claude scratched his head reflectively. "It's a bit of a teaser," he said. "We can't expect to remain here for ever. That wouldn't suit us at all; nor the Arabs either. They're certain to pour in upon us. So——"

"We have to make our plans to move," Alphonse told them directly in that quiet, detached way he had, with a coolness which, now that they had come to know him, seemed to be only natural with the Frenchman. "And personally, I don't see that there should be much difficulty. The first thing, though, is to make use of this lull, and bring in the spoils of battle. There are the clothes of those beggars we have shot, and the camels."

"But—why?" demanded Dereck.

"Why? Well, it's too early to state. But they might come in useful later on. Come on. But whatever you do, don't go too far from the oasis."

Shouting a warning to Hal to keep ward and watch,

and to cover them with his rifle, the four set out for the ground over which the enemy had charged, where two of the camels stood, as if inviting their protection. Indeed, once their owners had been shot or had been thrown, these beasts seemed to have lost interest in the proceedings.

"Lucky for us, too," Alphonse cried. "Camels may come in very useful, and we may thank our stars they are not horses. In the first place, horses are of little use in this sandy country, and then they would nearly certainly have bolted when the Arabs turned tail and rode away. Look out, you fellows! A camel's the most ill-grained brute that was ever invented. He'll look harmless, and then let out with a hind foot and knock you endways. He'll grunt and growl and grumble till you think he's positively ill, and then he'll take a chunk out of your arm while you're stroking him. I hate 'em. I can understand a horse, and make him understand and appreciate me. But a camel—well, he's hopeless. Get a hold of his head-rope and shout at him. Then keep ahead. Never go within reach of his hind legs if you wish to avoid an injury."

Alphonse might, as he had said, be hopelessly at sea when dealing with a camel; but Jack, the rollicking sailor who had joined them so unexpectedly, assumed at once such a command over the beasts left by the Arabs that he was promptly made their attendant. Going up to the nearest, which hung its head and mowed at him, he seized the head-rope and called to it.

"You jest sit up there!" he cried. "None o' yer

grousin' at me! Keep that for the Arabs. Ah! yer would, would yer!"

The beast made a grab at his hand, and received an instant blow over the nose, Jack swinging the slack end of the head-rope dexterously. Then, as if that were quite sufficient, and as if a camel understands blows only and not caresses, the brute followed the sailor with a docility which was wonderful. A minute later Jack had the second, and trudging on a little way halted in front of a third, the one which had been brought so suddenly to the ground by one of the bullets fired from the oasis. Blood was streaming from a wound in its forehead—a long, clean wound which had traversed the width of the frontal bone and appeared to have done no other injury.

"Only stunned him," called out Jack. "Made him feel silly for a while, and brought him down all standing. He's giddy now, like that old chief. You can see it by his eye. But he'll be fit for anything before the day's done. Here, get up, me beauty!"

The brute was resting on its knees, moving its jaws viciously, and swaying its head from side to side. But at Jack's command it stood up promptly, though it continued to sway giddily. However, encouraged by the presence of its two comrades, it followed to the oasis, where the gallant Jack shouted an order at it, causing it to kneel, and, having tied up the others, at once proceeded to bathe the wound across its forehead.

Meanwhile Claude and Dereck and Alphonse had relieved the bodies of those Arabs who had been killed of their outer clothing and of their weapons.

Then they gathered up the spoils they had obtained, and, receiving a warning shout from Hal, hurried back to their defences.

"Fellows over there look like coming on again," he called to them as they entered the oasis. "There's been a deal of talking, and the man in the pith helmet looks as if he had been at first bribing and then threatening them. Vote we let 'em get a little closer this time before we start letting into them. It'll create a greater impression, and if we beat off twelve before, we ought easily to be able to tackle what's left of those Arabs. Yes. They've started to come on again, only this time they're scattering."

In the brilliantly sunlit desert outside the oasis the remainder of the enemy could now be seen to be dividing into couples, each of which rode off till a wide interval separated it from the others—until, indeed, the riders surrounded the oasis. Then the man in the pith helmet blew a whistle, and at once the camels were turned inward and approached at a walking pace, as if there were no hurry about the matter.

"Better try a pot-shot soon," Alphonse called out to Hal. "It's different now from last time, when they charged all together. We've got to upset their calculations somehow, and the best way will be by knocking them over. Have a turn; Dereck and I will try later."

There was silence for a while, and on looking up Claude caught sight of his cousin carefully changing his position. He had curled one leg over a branch and hooked the toes beneath the calf of the other.

Then, lying out along the branch, he rested his elbow on it and levelled his weapon. It was, perhaps, a minute later when a shot rang out from the tree-top, followed in an instant by a loud shout out in the open, and then by a shriek.

"Bull's-eye!" cried Dereck. "Look!"

One of the Arabs had risen in his saddle. The man seemed to be actually standing in the stirrups slung on either side of his native saddle. And there for a while he remained poised, as if peering ahead of him. Then they saw him grip at the horn at the head of his saddle, and settle back unsteadily into his seat. But an instant afterwards he was waving his arms frantically, one bearing his rifle; and as if spurred on by pain and anger, he dragged at the head-rope of his mount, and prodded it with the butt of his weapon. In a minute he was being borne forward quite alone, still urging his beast to greater exertions.

"Best put in another shot," said Alphonse, throwing himself flat on the sand and making ready. "It won't do to let that fellow get within easy reach of us."

His cheek fell against the stock of his rifle, his eye glanced along the sights, while his finger went to the trigger. Then a call from Dereck caused him to throw the weapon up and stare at the Arab. For here again was presented to them a sample of the hardness and courage of these Arabs. The man charging down upon them had been mortally wounded by Hal's bullet, and might well have fallen out of his saddle. But with an iron will he kept his position. Then, fired by hate of the infidels, and filled with a courage which matched that of the old chief who had

fallen a prisoner to our heroes, he urged his beast forward, determined to come to grips with them before his life was ended. However, his wound and the distance he had to cover were too much even for his strength of will. He wobbled badly in his saddle, and just as Alphonse was about to fire toppled over heavily, falling in a heap on the sand, where he lay on his face, still and motionless. As for the camel, now that its head had been set for the oasis it came on without a halt, its head up, its long neck stretched out in front, snorting and snarling and raising shrill cries later as it got wind of those three which Jack had tied up beneath the trees.

"You can leave it to join the others," sang out Dereck to Jack. "Look out, you fellows! The enemy are coming on hard, and look as if they meant to get to close quarters."

A glance out into the desert was quite sufficient to show the truth of Dereck's statement. Indeed, the death of that single Arab seemed to have roused his comrades, and now, instead of walking their beasts, they could be seen urging them into a gallop. Soon they were coming on as fast as the camels could bring them, and already a hail of bullets was swishing amongst the tree-trunks and across the oasis. More wonderful than all, perhaps, Otto Scholz, driven to boldness by sheer desperation, was leading the band, and was shouting encouragement to his followers. Things looked nasty, in fact, and at once Dereck and his friends made ready for a hot encounter.

CHAPTER VII

In a Tight Corner

SHOUTING as they came, and flinging their rifles high in the air, only to catch them again with a dexterity which was wonderful, the Arabs bore down upon the oasis, the traitor Otto Scholz screaming at their head. Those men he led proved themselves experts at firing from the saddle, too, for no amount of movement seemed to make any difference to them, though, to be sure, their shooting was of the wildest. But then that mattered little, for they had no direct target at which to aim, merely the trees beneath which they knew the defenders to be lying.

"Getting hot, eh?" grinned Dereck, lifting his head and seeing that Claude also was sitting up. "Beastly hard to hit 'em while they're moving."

"Because you're aiming direct, perhaps," the New Zealander called back at him. "Give 'em a good foot in front, and aim plumb for the centre of their bodies. And Dereck——"

"Yes." The middy grunted the answer, for just then he was prone again, his eye to his sights, his finger on the trigger. "Eh?" he grunted again, sitting up on a sudden with a faint wisp of smoke issuing from the muzzle. "Got him, Claude! Fol-

lowed your advice. George! Wish I had bagged that German!"

"Just what I was going to advise you to do," Claude called back to him. "I don't like his looks. He means to get in close to us and use the revolver I see him flourishing. He's a dangerous man, and cousin to our Alphonse or no cousin, we ought to shoot him."

"Hear! hear!" the Frenchman sang out. "I'm in agreement. I couldn't do it myself, but if he gets a bullet, why, he deserves it. Hang it all! Missed again, and they're getting nearer."

The enemy were, indeed, getting dangerously near, and their scattered formation made their approach all the more difficult and dangerous to deal with. In addition, as if taught by the losses they had already sustained, they came on now in a zigzag course, each man apart from his fellow, though the couples into which they had split kept within a few paces of one another. Otto Scholz came on alone, however, bending low in his saddle, sheltering his ugly body behind the huge head of his camel, his finger at the trigger of his revolver. And as Alphonse and Dereck had said, those moving marks were difficult to hit.

Bang! From aloft Hal's rifle snapped every few seconds, and clouds of sand could be seen rising beside or behind the enemy. But no hit was registered till the Arabs were within some sixty yards of the oasis. Then the Australian up aloft gave vent to a shout, while an Arab was seen to tumble out of his saddle.

"Which just levels up the numbers," growled Jack,

pulling back the robes, which would fall over his wrists. "Which'll just give us a nice sort of even tussle. It don't matter nohow now, we'll whop 'em. Only, of course, there's always the chance of one of our party getting wounded. That'd go hard with him and with the rest, for we've got to get out of this somehow and some day, and a wounded comrade adds to difficulties. Hah! Mr. Smallweed's managed to bag another."

Yet four desperate men might well do much damage to the five hiding in the oasis, and if ever a man meant ill to his enemies it was the renegade German, Alphonse's cousin. Inflamed, as it were, by the sight he could now obtain of Dereck and his friends, and stung to madness by the thought that he might have been detected already—for had he not seen that flash from amongst the trees and guessed that it must have been caused by a pair of field-glasses?—he was belabouring his camel with a heavy whip, while the fingers of his other hand grasped that weapon to which Claude had drawn attention. His face, too, now getting clearly visible, was a sight to terrify anyone—that is, if Dereck and his light-hearted friends had been at all inclined to be frightened. Fortunately their nerves were of steel. They were young, sturdy, of independent temperament, and brought up amongst a people to whom fighting may be said to come naturally. Already, indeed, they had proved themselves to be possessed of no mean courage, and was it likely now that a face, however distorted by passion, would lessen their determination? To show how he felt, Dereck rose steadily to his knees and aimed at

the German, the bullet swishing within an inch of his helmet, and causing the valiant Otto to duck of a sudden. By then the Arabs were within twenty yards of the outer fringe of trees, and it became evident that hand-to-hand fighting was likely to happen.

"Behind the trees!" shouted Claude, springing from his trench and taking post behind one of the palms. Jack followed suit by leaping behind another, from which points of vantage they faced two of the enemy. As for Dereck and Alphonse, they obeyed the shout and found themselves immediately in front of the part for which the German was making. The five minutes which followed were filled with the most intense excitement and movement. Shots resounded from every quarter, and the bullets sent by those who remained of the enemy swept amongst the palm trees, chipping flakes of bark from the trunks and whistling past the ears of the defenders.

Otto Scholz was now using his revolver, and, borne by the frantic camel he bestrode, came dashing right into the centre of the oasis. There seemed a fate about it that he should come face to face with his own cousin, though the direction he was following, as he burst his way across the stretch of grass extending between the two clumps of trees, would have swept him yards away from him. But a shot from Claude's revolver ricochetted from one of the trees, and, screaming across the open as a bullet does when its direction is abruptly changed, struck Otto's camel on the hindquarters. With a grunt and a scream of pain it swung to the left, almost unseating Otto, and then, its pace almost doubled, it tore its way through the trees,

threatening to dash its rider against the trunks past which it was rushing. Then for just a brief instant the cousins came face to face, Alphonse far more easily recognizable now, for the rush of events and his own active movements had swept his turban from his head. As for Otto Scholz, who could fail to see that he was a German?

Alphonse saw him sit up of a sudden with protruding eyes and mouth opened wide. Then the ruffian lifted his revolver, and would have shot his cousin down but for another of those lucky chances which happen in such situations. It was a bullet from the sailor that saved Alphonse's life, a bullet which perforated the German's hand and caused him to drop his weapon. A second later he was borne onward by his camel, on through the trees and out into the open, sandy desert. Nor did any of his followers fare any better. Driving their animals up to the very edge of the trees, they were met by such a violent fusillade and by such a rattle of weapons that their beasts decided the situation for them. Swinging round with an agility of which one would hardly have thought such cumbersome beasts to be capable, they made off at their fastest pace, Hal plugging shots at them till they were far out in the desert.

"And that's the end of the business so far as actual attacks are concerned," said Dereck, sitting down on the grass and wiping the sweat from his forehead. "Next thing is to get our breath. After that, I suppose, like every other party in a fix, we'll hold a council of war. By the way, anyone hit?"

"New Zealand contingent fit and well," reported

Claude with a grin of pleasure. "But it was hot while it lasted. Very hot, in fact, and—— I say, what about those camels?"

"We want 'em," said Alphonse abruptly. "They're just the very thing to save the situation. I'll go out and get 'em before they stray away. Jack's the man to help me. Eh? Oh, anyone hurt?" he added, hearing Dereck again appeal to him. "France, no, sir. All well. But our cousin nearly made a mess of my business. It wasn't for want of trying that he failed to shoot me. I've got to thank one of you fellows for plugging his shooting hand with a bullet. Now, Jack, all well with you?"

"Aye, aye, sir. All shipshape. All taut above and below. But I ain't so certain as the gun-room's altogether in order. Mr. Smallweed, sir, judgin' by your colour I should say as you'd been hit. Beggin' pardon, but it don't seem to me natural that you should be sittin' there looking as if you was hurt and pretendin' as you're as fit as the rest of us. Look out, gentlemen, he's agoin' to go over."

The watchful sailor was indeed just in time to catch the swaying form of the gallant middy, and when his comrades investigated the matter they discovered that Mr. Midshipman Smallweed had been wounded. There was a neat little hole at the point of his shoulder in front, and another rather far behind, where the bullet had made its exit.

"Here! What's this?" he demanded, sitting up as they were in the act of examining the injury, while the colour came surging back to his face. "Eh? Wounded! Well, I could have told you that. I got

it half an hour ago during the first attack. So what's the use of fussing?"

"None, old chap," Claude told him. "Only, being one of the party, we're going to look after you properly. Just sit still, and stop grumbling and grimacing. Good thing the bullet went right through, or I'd have had to use my knife and open up the wound so as to extract it. Just you shut up, young Dereck, or I'll do it yet, and then you'll holler. Yes, yes, I've done a course of ambulance work and know something, enough to tackle this business. Now, Alphonse, a strip of linen and some clean water. There we go!"

"And what about the camels, eh?" grumbled Dereck, pointing with his other hand to the two beasts still standing beside their dead riders out in the open. "Going to lose 'em, eh, just for the sake of fussing over a wound that's not worth mentioning? What! Want me to wear a sling, to carry my arm in a beastly thing of that sort! I——"

"You'll just do as you're told," Claude told him severely. "Here, have a drink. As to the camels, Jack's gone out after them with Hal. You're our only casualty, you know, Dereck, and we've got to make the most of you. But, I say, it was plucky of you not to holler till the show was over. Mighty plucky! I expect the wound hurts a bit, eh?"

"Nothing worth speaking about," grinned Dereck, beginning rather to appreciate the kindly ministrations of his cousin, and mollified by what he had just said to him. "Didn't feel it at all at first, though it bowled me clean over. Felt as if a fellow had thrown a brick at me. Then, after this second 'do' with the

Arabs, when the fun was all over, it began to ache and stab. I somehow went faint, and then—and then you fellows were fiddling with the wound. But it's heaps better now, and who cares so long as we beat those beggars? George! It was warm! And did you see that German, Alphonse's cousin? Always thought our friend was a queer sort of fellow—a queer-looking chap, I mean; but, the cousin! My word! Don't he look an out-and-outer, a regular ruffian—the chap you'd suspect of being a traitor?"

Claude could not but admit that Dereck was saying only what was correct, for if ever he had set eyes on a disagreeable person it was this Otto. Not that he had had much time to gather impressions, for the German's visit had been a very fleeting one, and there had been so much other movement that to take note of any single individual was almost out of the question. Yet Claude was an observant person, and Otto had naturally enough attracted his attention, seeing that during this second affair he had been the leader of the Arabs.

"He ain't very handsome, this Otto fellow," he told Dereck carelessly. "And, as you've said, Alphonse himself is a queer one to look at, only he's a pure white man, I tell you. Sterling stuff right through. A better, a braver, or a more capable comrade one couldn't wish for. But Otto what's-his-name—oh! Scholz! Well, what's it matter to us if he is ugly and short and squint-eyed, and all the rest of it? We know he'd like to kill the whole lot of us off. Every German has that sort of feeling for the Allies. And we can guess that he'll be in a fidget while we're alive

and kicking, particularly if he's playing a traitor's game, as seems evident. He'll be afraid of tumbling up against us some day, and of getting arrested as a spy. Well, that's his look-out. If I see a chap back in Cairo like this Otto—and one couldn't very well find another ugly fellow like him—I shall call on him to 'hands up' quick, and shall have my shooter handy. There! That's the end of the beggar for the moment."

But was it quite the end, as the jovial Claude had so easily stated? True, for the moment it seemed that the German could be no longer an immediate danger to them; his numbers were so reduced that for actual attack he was helpless. Yet this Otto was to be in days to come a thorn in the sides of at least one of this happy gathering.

He was a traitor, as we have said, a naturalized British subject who longed for the downfall of his adopted country. The pursuit of this object might be expected to occupy the majority of his efforts. But not all: for, like many of his kidney and of his nationality and the treacherous class to which he belonged, Otto was a schemer amongst schemers, a man who could think nationally, like the rest of Germany; could work for the success of that giant Teutonic scheme; could and would, indeed, trample into the earth all who stood in the way of it; and was capable of breaking his oath, of tearing up any agreement, of any ruffianly act so long as it suited his main purpose. Why not? It was part of the teaching spread throughout Germany. Nothing must stand in the way of that great ambition, nothing wreck Germany's hope

and fixed intention of gaining world-dominion. When the great day came for action all must be thrown to the winds. Treaties must go: international treaties, documents of sacred value amongst the nations, to which the Fatherland had set its solemn signature—they must be torn in shreds if need be. Honour—what was it to Germany compared with the attainment of her one ambition! No doubt the world would cry out at such sacrilege, would abuse the Kaiser and his people. But that would be set right in the end, when the Fatherland had destroyed those hostile armies likely to be opposed to it, and had set its huge, merciless boot-heel on the necks of the nations. Then who dared to speak of Germany's dishonour would suffer, who dared to hint that she had waged war with discredit to herself would be treated without mercy. Yes, the tearing of that treaty which guarded Belgium's integrity was nothing—was a mere item, a means to an end, something which every German could applaud and was ready to copy if need be.

Then, if the master, the Kaiser, had set such an example, what more natural than that his obedient people should follow? If the great German War-lord and his Staff had sanctioned the invasion of Belgium, and waged war upon women and children—facts proved beyond dispute by most careful inquiry—if these men in authority had thrown honour to the winds, had encouraged an unparalleled ferocity, both against soldiers and against civilians, then why should not a humble individual of German origin do likewise? Why should not Otto make use of his opportunities? He had opportunities, this ugly, sleek

German. He had friends, easygoing friends amongst the British, and he, too, was British—for was there not a document of naturalization, signed and sealed formally, to prove that fact indisputable? Why should he not help on the aims of his country? No. Not Britain. That was only his cleverness, the sleek cleverness encouraged by the authorities in Berlin, which made it appear as if these German *emigrés* had cut themselves adrift from the land of their birth. It was just a ruse, a *ruse de guerre*, likely to bear abundant fruit once hostilities had commenced.

Was there ever such dishonour and such treachery? Otto was no better and no worse than many other Germans. But though he never lost sight of the desires of his Kaiser, nevertheless he never lost sight of opportunities likely to be of personal benefit to himself.

Let us but hint at possibilities. Alphonse was an only son, a "mother's darling" as Dereck had styled him, but a very gallant fellow, as he and his cousins had discovered the Frenchman; and Alphonse's father, the treacherous Otto's uncle, was a successful business man. Why, he had depots at Port Said, at Suez, at Alexandria, and at Cairo. He was rich. His business brought him in a most tempting income. Now, Otto was never likely to succeed to that while Alphonse was living—never likely, perhaps, when he was dead. But—if and when Germany was triumphant he, Otto, could claim to be the next-of-kin, and having, moreover, already received the grateful approval of his Kaiser for various little helpful actions, various little illustrations of German cunning and treachery, why,

then, of course, Otto would succeed. The business would be his. That tempting income would rattle in his pockets.

"They must be killed," he was saying at that very moment, as he sat his panting camel and stared back at the oasis. "These white men, that Alphonse, the New Zealander whom I observed, all undoubtedly from Cairo, they must be prevented from returning to Egypt. For, if not, how am I to continue the work I am doing? As for this French cousin of mine—well, he is no worse an enemy than the rest, not even more dangerous, for he is filled, like the British, with stupid pride. He might denounce me were he to meet me face to face in Egypt. But, first, he would warn me perhaps. And why? Because he would first of all shield his own family from an announcement which he and they would consider a disgrace."

"Sending one of the chaps off somewhere," said Alphonse some ten minutes later, watching Otto and his men through his glasses. "That means that he is asking for reinforcements, and that we shall be watched and kept here till they arrive."

"Kept here?" chimed in Dereck, now walking about and feeling quite strong again, thanks to some soup which Jack had insisted on his swallowing. "I rather like that, don't you know. Kept here, indeed! If I want to get out of this oasis—and I ain't so sure that I do at present—why, I go, that's all, Otto what's-his-beastly-name, or no Otto."

Hal laughed loudly, while the gallant Jack grinned. It did them good to hear such an announcement made by the jovial middy; stirred them up, as it were, and

seemed to clear the air of doubts and difficulties.

"And why should we not go?" asked Claude. "Only—where? That's the teaser."

"Not where, but when?" Alphonse told them in his serious way. "We'd better have that powwow that Dereck talks about. Now, let's face things squarely. We're in the enemy's country."

"Agreed," sang out Dereck. "Tell us something that we don't know, there's a dear, Alphonse."

"And they know it, of course. Shut up, Dereck! Well, we've licked 'em hollow this time, and are safe for the moment. But a man has gone off for reinforcements, proving that they are within reach of this oasis. There may be few of them, or many, and it stands to reason, seeing that we've licked this lot, that there will be a goodly number. That gives us our marching orders."

"Marching orders!" exclaimed Hal.

"Yes. Those chaps came very near to getting us that last time when they charged, and though we're better off for rifles and ammunition now, twenty men would certainly break down our defence and kill or capture the whole party. So common sense tells us to move on. If there was a boat——"

"Ah, if there were!" growled Dereck. "But there ain't, so heave ahead."

"If there were we'd take to the sea, of course. As it is, we must embark on what's sometimes known as the ship of the desert. We've made a haul of camels, and we can soon learn to ride 'em. We can practise right away, for that matter. Then we've enough garments to provide the whole party with disguises.

What's to prevent our trekking, then? It's the only course. We become a band of wandering Arabs looking for the enemy. I'm the chief. I speak Arabic, and look exactly like an Arab when I'm dressed for the part. No one else need open his mouth, for it's usual for Arabs to be silent, and quite in the nature of things that their chief should be the spokesman."

"But—and where do we go?" asked Claude. You could see by his heightened colour, showing under the tan, that he was vastly interested. "We leave the oasis as a party of Arabs and ride away—where? Our friends are a long way from us."

"But not so far that we cannot reach them," Alphonse told them. "We're somewhere near the edge of the desert of El Tih, towards the south of which lies Mount Sinai. Well, there are some two or three caravan routes across it, and we know already that the Turks say that they will cross that desert somehow and attack the Canal and Egypt. It's been done before. I believe Napoleon crossed into this country from Egypt, and in days long gone by Egypt came this way and was invaded in her turn. The job, of course, as a general rule, is to find water. There are some wells on one route, that on this side, parallel with the coast. But the great difficulty will be the enemy. We've heard they're massing somewhere near Beersheba. That's not so far from this spot, I judge, and for all we know the fellow Otto Scholz has sent off has ridden to the main army for reinforcements. It's just a choice of evils for us. If we stick here we're likely to be done."

"Cooked!" Dereck told the party with emphasis.

"Sure to be captured and then killed. Well, I ain't for that party. I should say we're all in favour of making a dash and taking our chances. We can't well choose any other course, and—who knows?—with a bit of luck and cheek we might pass ourselves off as Alphonse suggests, and even reach our friends in Egypt. What sort of a length is the journey?"

"Perhaps a hundred miles across the desert—say four nights' travelling. Then there's the strip between this and the desert, and that's a doubtful quantity. Well?"

The Frenchman looked round at each individual of the party and received emphatic nods from all.

"Then it's settled," he said. "Now for preparations. We shall want food, and we must get into our disguises. But there's the old chief to be considered. If he stays here he watches our preparations, unless we blindfold him; and even then he hears all that passes, and can guess what we're doing. I suggest that we offer him freedom and send him off to join Otto. He can't hurt us there, for an additional one won't help them just now. Then, when we're left to ourselves we'll kill a couple of the goats and cook the flesh. There are water-bags on each of the camels we've captured—they never go without 'em in this country—and those we can fill. We can divide up the guns and ammunition, and can learn how to make our camels kneel so that we can mount easily. The riding part of the business isn't so very easy, nor yet so very hard, though it makes a fellow ache in every bone of his body when he's not used to it. However, that's one of the least things to be

considered. Now for the old chief. Does everyone agree?"

"Certainly!" Claude told him.

"With you everywhere," cried Dereck gaily, while Hal and the sailor responded with equal warmth.

Alphonse at once went to the spot where the old chief lay bound hand and foot, and with Claude's help threw off his bonds.

"This is the way in which the white man treats his honoured enemies," he told the chief. "You are free to depart. We wish no harm to you, but rather do we wish you well, for you have proved a most gallant enemy."

There was astonishment in the face of the old man. For the first time perhaps for many a day he actually allowed those proud features to show his actual feelings. The eyes which had shot such furious glances at the white men within the oasis actually looked troubled, while his lips twitched with uncertainty.

"But," he said slowly, "then is Allah indeed kind to an old man who was ready for death. Ye infidels, ye wish then that I should depart, peacefully, unharmed? Surely that is strange! I and my brothers could do no such thing, for it is against our teaching. With us an enemy is an enemy always, to be slain when the occasion arises. Tell me, is it because of my age that you spare my life?"

"It is because a white man does not kill an enemy who is in his hands and who is helpless," Alphonse told him. "It is also because we respect a gallant man such as you are. As for your age, was it not you, Chief, who ventured alone to our encampment?

Surely there were younger men amongst the band? But you—you showed courage, you pointed the way for your followers. Of a surety, it is not so much because of your age, but because of the courage you have shown, that we would wish to treat you with honour. Farewell, Chief, and greetings."

Stroking his white beard reflectively, and still wearing that puzzled expression, the Arab went slowly from the oasis.

"Of a surety these white men are incomprehensible," he was saying to himself. "Of a surety their doings are beyond the understanding of one of the Faithful. Well, Allah has willed it so. This night, with help from our people, we shall most surely slay them."

He left a scene of bustle in the oasis beneath those tall palm trees. Hal and Claude, and Alphonse and Dereck, assisted by the jovial Jack, were exceedingly hard at work, while a savoury smell pervaded the place. Indeed, their preparations for leaving went on without a pause till darkness had fallen. Then Alphonse called to his friends, who had already donned the Arab dresses they had captured. One by one they mounted their kneeling camels and caused them to rise again.

"Not a word," said Alphonse. "Simply follow. The rope we have made fast to all the beasts will force them to keep on after my camel. If we are challenged, don't answer, and above all don't attempt to shoot if we are discovered. Now, on we go! Let's hope we shall be as lucky as we have been."

CHAPTER VIII

News of Great Importance

OUT in the open, silent desert four men sat their camels watching and waiting for a sign of the enemy who had taken possession of the oasis and who had dealt so roughly with them. There was Otto Scholz, crouched on his saddle, his ugly face sunk in his two hands, while his elbows rested on the top of the horn of the saddle. Beneath the pith helmet which had made him so conspicuous his brows were furrowed, his eyes half-closed, as if to help him to peer through the darkness, while once again he had resumed that exceedingly disagreeable habit of gnawing at his stubbly moustache.

"Hist! What was that? A sound in the distance! The white men moving from the oasis?"

"Nay. It is but the grunting of one of the camels which these dogs have taken from us," declared the chief, now mounted on another animal, his fierce old face presented to the oasis. Those two deep-set eyes were gleaming too, gleaming with anger and mortification. For gratitude to an enemy is not one of the failures of your Arab. Where he makes war, there is no measure of gentleness in his methods; and mercy such as had been shown to him already is misunder-

stood, is but a sign of weakness, something to be taken advantage of. "But in a little while, infidel, in a little while there will be movement. These dogs must leave the place, for they know that we have men coming. Bah! Would that it were not so!"

"But, surely," expostulated Otto, "it is just what we want. Seeing that we were powerless and our numbers reduced, I sent off at once to the Turkish armies. There is a camel corps attached to one of the brigades, a corps of Turks, and they will be glad to pay off a score against these fools."

"Yea, and glad to gibe at us who have failed, at twelve men—if men they care to name us—who have failed in an attack upon but five—five men, infidel, who are or were but indifferently armed. Of a truth the thing is a shame, and I would that I had fallen! Even can I admire those five, all save one being but youths tasting of their first manhood. They are brave, and have fought a fight such as one of our race likes to see and can appreciate. They have beaten twelve, and having shown courage and skill have now shown weakness. Tell me, infidel, was it because of my age that they liberated me?"

"How can I say?" the German grumbled. "These British were always fools and magnanimous. Perhaps it was because of your age, old man."

"Or because I was a man, eh?" demanded the chief with flashing eyes. "Because I alone of all the twelve ventured to come near to them. Maybe it was for that reason. Yet I think not. There was deeper meaning in their action."

"And that?" asked Otto carelessly. He had little

love for the chief, and no admiration. Besides, it bored him to have to guess at riddles when the men he so desired to see captured might be making plans to evade him. "What was this deeper meaning, Chief? Does it concern what may follow?"

"Yea. By Allah, they are as cunning as any one of us, those five. They have a plan, had it too when I was with them. And so that I should not even guess at their intentions they set me free. Since then there has been movement in the oasis. There has been great cooking of food, and drawing of water, and even now their fire burns brightly. Not long ago I saw their figures moving against it. Of a surety they make ready to leave, and since the moon rises three hours after midnight they must quit the oasis before its rays shine across the desert."

It was a happening which had occurred to the worthy Jack. "Beggin' pardon," he had said to his officer, "beggin' pardon, Mr. Smallweed, but as we're about to leave this here oasis it's as well to remember that there'll be a moon. Now a moon would show us leavin', and——"

"We must get away at least an hour before," Alphonse had added. "But we must make 'em think that we are still here, and for that purpose we'll build up our fire just before leaving. It might be a good move, too, to set the goats free. They'll wander about for a while no doubt, and will show against the light of the fire. The smallest movement will attract the Arabs, and if it only holds their attention for a while will allow us to get off safely."

Then the moment had come for their departure,

and having listened for a while and heard not a sound, they urged their camels from the oasis. The rope which Jack had had the sense to suggest they should pass from head to head of their mounts proved indeed to be their salvation, for otherwise they would very easily have become parted and might have lost touch with one another in the darkness. As it was, they passed out into the desert in Indian file, in absolute silence, one camel following on the heels of another—Alphonse in advance, Dereck next to him, for the young fellow's arm was painful and he was more or less disabled; Claude third in the line, then the sailor, while Hal brought up the rear, his rifle slung out of harm's way across his shoulder. Indeed, each one of the five had been careful to see before leaving that his weapons were set at "safe", and that by no possibility could a jolt release a trigger.

Could one have seen those five, what a picture they would have presented! Indeed, when at length the moon came up and flooded the desert with its pale, ghostly light, it showed five men as typically Arab as one could well imagine. At that moment, too, the long rope connecting the camels was thrown off, so that the party rode more together. And who would have suspected them to be other than they appeared? Alphonse, riding at the head of the group, made as proud a chief as did that old man they had so lately set at liberty. Even in the broad light of day he would have passed muster, would have safely passed the scrutiny of even an Arab. For the Frenchman was no novice at the part he was playing. Indeed, if Dereck and his friends had but known, Alphonse had

spent months with the Arabs, for his father carried on an extensive business with them. As for Dereck himself, the middy looked the Arab to perfection, while the voluminous robes in which he was swathed hid the fact that he carried his left arm in a sling. Claude may have looked perhaps rather big and bulky for one of the denizens of the desert; but then there are exceptions even amongst Arabs, and one may see big men here and there who attract attention because of their size or because of their splendid physique, just as did this young New Zealander.

But no one could make an Arab of Jack. He was too much the sailor, too utterly British and insular, if you wish it. The breadth of his shoulders, the way in which he swayed his body, and the manner in which his turban would ride on his head, despite cautions from Alphonse, told surely enough that he was merely masquerading. Still, at a pinch, if he rode in the centre of the group and were not too visible, even Jack might pass muster—that is, at a reasonable distance. Seen close, face to face, he would most certainly be detected in a minute. The last of the five, the gallant Australian, seemed to have taken as kindly to his disguise as did Alphonse. Or was it his sun-burned skin, his regular and rather sharp features which helped in the deception? In any case, he filled the part to perfection, and as he sat his camel, hunched forward as is the way of Arabs, he might have been taken for a native.

Riding straight out from the oasis, led by Alphonse, the five had not ventured to speak till after the moon had risen. Then, having thrown off the long rope

connecting the heads of their mounts, they jogged along side by side and close together.

"Which way are we going?" demanded Dereck, staring at the sky and endeavouring to make out the four points of the compass. "West, I imagine. It looks like it, though I ain't too sure. I could say in a jiffy if I was on dry land, but this brute wobbles and jerks so much that stars get tumbling together."

"All the same you've hit the right nail on the head," Alphonse responded. "I did just what those Arabs might expect us not to do."

"What's that?" demanded Hal.

"Led straight towards the point from which they first attacked us, and from which Otto sent off a man for reinforcements. In fact, I led you straight for the mouth of the lion."

"Bravo! Just the thing I shouldn't have thought of," Claude told him frankly. "And it's paid to be bold. Do you think they spotted us?"

"Never! But they will soon know whether we have left the oasis. They'll be getting fretful and curious, and if I know that chief at all he'll insist on making a personal investigation. Then the cat'll be out of the bag, and the beggars will be racing round to find out the line we've taken."

"Yes, and then?" asked Dereck. "How long will it take 'em to decide? It's light enough already to pick up tracks, and surely we've left plenty."

Alphonse chuckled and then laughed outright. It was almost the first time that there had been such an outburst from him, for the Frenchman was such a retiring sort of fellow, so silent as a rule, and rather given

to being serious and sober, that such laughter sounded almost uncanny. His friends looked at him inquisitively, almost severely.

"Eh? What?" demanded Claude a little crossly.

"Just this. Dereck says he thinks we've left some tracks behind us," laughed Alphonse. "Of course we have. It's what we aimed at, didn't we?"

"Aimed at! But——" cried Hal.

"You see," explained the grinning Frenchman, "if we'd gone away from the oasis in the opposite direction we should have crossed a stretch of sand marked only by the camels which took part in that second attack, when the enemy divided into twos and came against us from all directions. The marks they left would be picked up at once. Now, if we had gone that way the prints left by five camels would most certainly have attracted attention."

"Given our show away, in fact," laughed Dereck, seeing the drift of the argument.

"Precisely. But in the other direction, the line they took when the whole twelve charged down upon us, the sand was churned up all over the place. The Arabs advanced and then retired over the same ground. There will be hosts of footmarks, and—and—don't you fellows see? ours'll be amongst them. They'll be bamboozled and finely bothered. It'll only be when they cast round in a wide ring that they'll come upon our tracks out in this direction, and even then they won't be too sure, I fancy, for they themselves have been over here also. But there you are. We're out of the wood for the moment. When it gets light we'll have to hunt round for another oasis in which to

shelter, and from what I remember of this country there'll be plenty of them. Indeed, there's a long stretch of wooded land just before you get to the fringe of the desert. Of course, if some fellows spot us, I'll have to go out and talk to 'em. But that we can tackle when the need occurs. Now——"

"Hark! I heard a shout, and——"

Claude gave them the warning, and the gallant Jack almost at the same moment pointed a finger to his front and drew the attention of his comrades to something approaching from the opposite direction.

"Halt!" Dereck gave the order, and for a while the party remained motionless, in deadly silence but for the grunting of their camels. Certainly there had been a shout from away behind them, from the direction of the oasis, and just as certainly someone was approaching from the opposite direction.

"It'll be the reinforcements which that Otto what's-his-name sent for," whispered Dereck. "Awkward! Kind of jumping out of the frying-pan into the fire."

Nothing, it seemed, could depress this jovial midshipman. He was even smiling, though his brows were furrowed and the moonlight showed that he was anxious. Still, the effort to cloak his real feelings, to endeavour to support the spirits of the party, did him honour. He even whistled, and then, remembering the need for silence, stopped abruptly.

"Reinforcements without a doubt," whispered Alphonse, when he had stared into the dimly-lit desert for a few moments. "Coming bang straight for us. Well, we'll have to take things as they arise. Let's cut clear off to the right. They may miss us entirely."

"And meanwhile our friends behind have learned something," said Claude, who had faced about and had been listening to the sounds coming from that direction. "I heard shouts—distant shouts. Then there was silence. But a few moments later I am sure that the fire we had left burning, and which was still just visible, was suddenly replenished. Seems to me that our old friends back there will meet these reinforcements."

If that were the case, there was all the more reason for this party of five to escape observation, and at once they prodded their grunting camels and set off on a line across the front of the advancing party whom they had seen in the distance. But they were not to escape unobserved. They heard shouts in the distance, and presently saw a horseman galloping across toward them.

"Probably a party of regular cavalry," thought Dereck. "Beastly awkward. Wonder what this chap'll want, and how Alphonse'll treat him?"

"Halt!" The Frenchman brought the party to a sudden stop. "Wait here," he told them sharply. "If there's trouble just ride on, and if you are followed send your beasts ahead as fast as possible. I'll ride out and meet this fellow before he gets near enough to learn more about us."

He jogged at the head-rope of the beast he rode, and sent him away to meet the horseman. Meanwhile Dereck and his friends went on slowly.

"Don't like it," he grumbled. "Seems like deserting Alphonse. But there was sound sense in his suggestion. Ah! They've met and are saluting.

That chap acts the Arab splendidly. Wish I was like him!"

Yes, Dereck and Claude and Hal had long since changed their ideas of the Frenchman. He amazed them still, for they couldn't get over their first impressions in such a hurry; and even now it was hard to believe that he was virtually leader of the party. Not that there was any particular individual in command. The occasion hardly needed it. Amongst friends such as they were there was the utmost harmony, and somehow things had happened so smoothly, suggestions coming from one or another just at the right moment, that there had never been a single hitch in the proceedings. But it was certainly in the nature of things only wise and sensible that Alphonse should for the moment command the party, for he was the chief of these supposed Arabs—a chief, moreover, who looked wonderfully imposing.

"Greetings!" he cried, having urged his camel forward and waylaid the advancing horseman. "Then what news, brother? You come in a hurry."

"Greetings! Yes," the fellow told him. He was a Turkish under-officer of the regular cavalry. "The officer sent me over when we saw you to ask tidings of some white men who have been cornered in an oasis. One arrived amongst us three hours ago who demanded reinforcements, for these white men had dealt severely with the Arabs. Are you of those Arabs?"

"Nay," Alphonse told him glibly and truthfully. "They yet surround the oasis, unless the white men have escaped in the darkness before the moon rose.

We are riding across in this direction to cut them off should they have escaped. Tell me, brother, you come from the head-quarters of the army?"

"From Beersheba. There we are concentrating for an immediate attack on those dogs of British."

"Ah! then we are within an easy ride of the city. We have roamed far and have lost our bearings. Tell me, friend, is this Beersheba far from here?"

"A short two-hours' ride," the trooper answered. "Our nearest troops are even closer."

"Then of a surety we must visit them and see what preparations the Sultan has made for overcoming the enemy. There are many of you there at Beersheba, friend and brother?"

"Mayhap thirty thousand horse and infantry. Perhaps more, perhaps less. There are guns too, my brother—and something better."

"Ah, something better! That is good," Alphonse told him, encouraging the man to be talkative. "You do well, you Turks. You are bold and venturesome. But perhaps—Allah knows—this Canal and the infidels will be too much for you."

At that the fellow bridled and swore. "Too much for us! These dogs and their Canal! But no, no," he smiled. "No, we are fully prepared. Listen: I will tell you, Chief, that which has been kept from all parties. But I who ride from camp to camp with messages have seen these things. There are boats, Chief—long, broad metal boats, such as you have never even imagined—and they lie ready in one of the camps to be transported across the desert."

"But—boats—to be transported across the desert!"

exclaimed Alphonse, vastly astonished to hear of such preparations. "But surely that is impossible?"

"And why, O Chief? There are carriages on wheels to take them, just as there are special wheels for the cannon, for otherwise their weight would drive them deep into the sand and there would be no getting them forward. Yes, it is a great thing that we are attempting, and very soon the infidel dogs will be driven out of Egypt."

"But—then you will attempt to cross the desert?" Alphonse exclaimed; for though the Turks had openly declared their intentions of attempting an invasion of Egypt, no one had ever taken their threats very seriously, for the natural difficulties they would have to encounter were well known. "There is the water difficulty," the Frenchman reminded the trooper.

"True. There are miles of hot, arid sand—a waterless desert. Yet it shall be crossed; and as to water, there are tanks already prepared in which a supply will be carried, and those tanks will run on broad wheels, just as will the pontoons and the cannon. Yes, these dogs will awake one morning to find the Canal crossed. For too long we have put up with their arrogance and their disdain of us. But, Chief, seeing that you ride to cut off these white men, I shall not detain you. Greetings, Chief, and may Allah reward you in this world and in the next according to your deserts!"

The man saluted, while Alphonse made the Arab signal. Then they parted, Alphonse to ride slowly back to his comrades. There he at once told his tale, giving all the information which he had obtained.

"Of course, it's of the greatest value, this news,"

said Dereck in his most official voice and way. "Most important. Our chaps don't believe much in these Turkish threats. Yet here is direct evidence of big preparations for invasion. We've got to cut and run, you fellows. The sooner we are back and across the Canal the better."

"Precisely, and it seems to me that we're doing our best even now to carry out that plan," sang out Claude. "But there's that desert to be crossed, and you may be sure that the enemy are patrolling this side of it, and most likely have scouting parties out. You see, they don't know that we haven't the intention of invading them ourselves."

"Wait, though. There's Otto Scholz, that scoundrelly cousin of mine," Alphonse reminded them suddenly. "I'd forgotten him for a moment. But he's with the enemy now, and two weeks ago he was in Cairo. You may make up your minds that he's obtained the fullest information of the position of our troops, and probably has even a sketch showing the run of our trenches. You never can tell what these cunning German spies won't find out. He's quite likely to have actually discovered the sites of our field- and machine-guns. That suspicion alone, and its communication to our people in Egypt, would be of great value. Yes, you fellows, it's got to be full steam ahead after this. We'll just have to chance patrols of the enemy camelry or horsemen. But, of course, we must rest our beasts, and as Dereck and Jack can easily direct our marches at night, why, we'll rest during the day-time. Now, forward! Towards morning we'll look out for a resting-place."

There was no doubt in the minds of all of them that their unfortunate landing on enemy soil had resulted in their obtaining some most valuable information, and it was clear to all that the sooner they transmitted it to their superiors in Egypt the happier they themselves would feel, and the better it would be for the British forces. Yet to dash ahead without reflection and without due precautions might very easily land them in the midst of difficulties, and altogether prevent their handing on the gist of what they had learned to the British authorities. Therefore, guided by Jack and Dereck, who, sailor-like, seemed to be able to direct a course as easily during the hours of darkness as they could in broad daylight, the party went on steadily across that sandy waste, halting twice during the night at some wells which they were lucky enough to stumble upon. Then the moon slowly waned, leaving them riding through pitch-black darkness. But that was only for a little while, for soon the east lightened, and presently they were able to see the country around them.

"I think," said Claude, who happened to be riding ahead—"I think, Alphonse, my dear fellow, that that place yonder looks the very spot for us."

The Frenchman swung his glasses to his eyes, having pulled in his camel, and for a while carefully investigated every yard of the long green oasis which stretched before them. Then he put them back in their case with a snap, and rode on smiling.

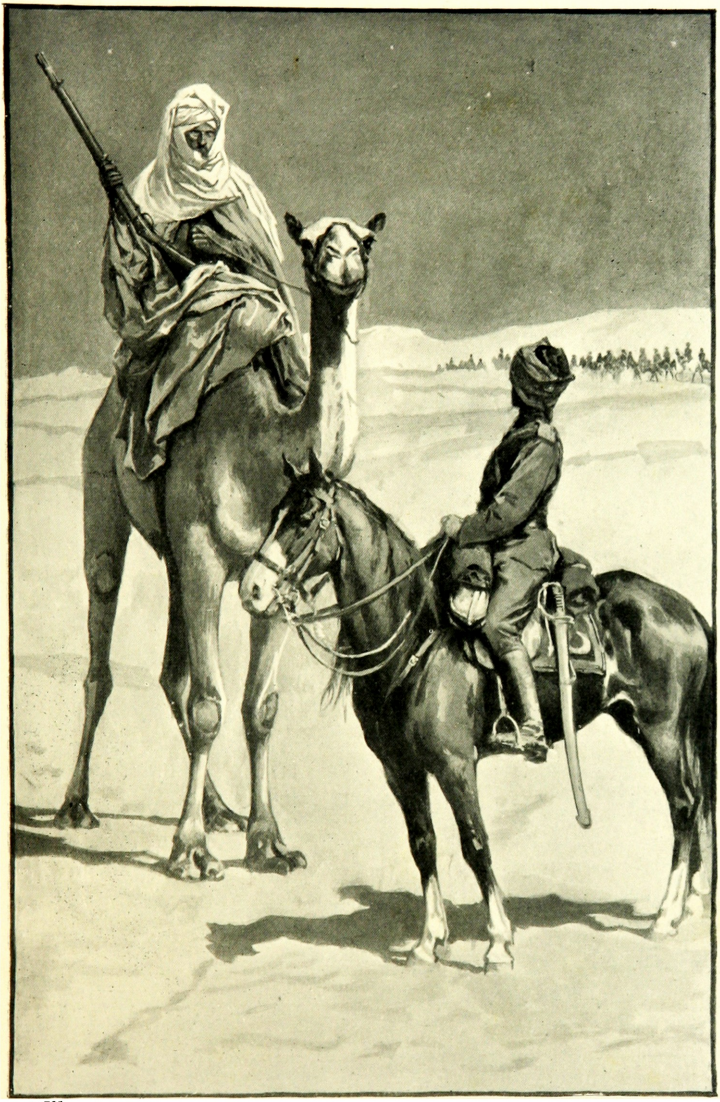
"It is just the very place for us," he said, "and uninhabited, I believe. In any case, we'll investigate. Let's hope there'll be no one to interfere with us."

"Nor to delay breakfast," Dereck added. "I'm just about peckish, I tell you."

Riding on at a rapid pace, they were soon entering a long strip of grass land, dotted with numerous palms, and rising at one end to quite a height. Nor was there a native visible. Choosing a hollow on one side of the rise they hobbled their camels, and in a little space of time Jack had a fire going and breakfast preparing. Indeed, they spent a restful day there, sleeping in turn, and making ready for the remainder of their journey. For the crossing of the desert of El Tih is a difficulty at any season, and now there were likely enough to be added difficulties in the shape of enemy parties. Still, neither Dereck nor Hal nor Claude cared a rap, and we may be sure that Alphonse and Jack were not in the least disconcerted. Indeed, it was a very cheerful party which saddled up as the darkness fell and set out for the desert.

"Blow the enemy!" was Mr. Midshipman Smallweed's characteristic remark. "He ain't going to keep me from gettin' back to Egypt. Not if I know it, you fellows. Besides, there's that Commander of mine. Jingo! bet he was angry when I was reported missing. But, once we're through, you'll see; the news we've got will get us all quick promotion."

What a thing it was to be young and careless and light-hearted! It simply helped to make nothing of dangers which might well have scared the party. Dereck was whistling in a low key as he led the group, while more than one of his comrades joined him in the secret wish that they might see some fun on the road and have a brush with the enemy.



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"TELL ME, BROTHER, YOU COME FROM THE HEAD-QUARTERS OF THE ARMY?"

CHAPTER IX

The Pursuit

DOWN below that long ridge, whereon grew palms in abundance, and within which were as many as a dozen wells containing the sweetest of sweet water, the desert of El Tih stretched far into the distance, far into the misty, ghostly distance, a panorama of swelling sand-dunes near the coast, of flat, arid, waterless desert farther inland. The moon floating so peacefully overhead made of this peculiar landscape almost a fairyland, for shapes were indistinct beneath those shimmering, silver rays; ridges in the distance—those self-same sand-dunes—assumed the proportions and the symmetry of houses, of Arab villages, of mosques with pinnacles hovering above them. So realistic, indeed, was the fantasy that Alphonse, who had lived his life in these eastern surroundings, could almost have imagined them to be real, and found himself sometimes listening—listening for the call of the *muezzins* from those minarets, calling to the Faithful as is their wont morning and evening.

"Stop! There was a sound. Listen!" He lifted a hand and brought the party of camelmen to a halt. "I thought I heard something," he said. "There!"

Yes, there was a sound, though it was not the call

of an Arab priest, nor the howl of a dog, nor the voices of the enemy. It was a deeper sound, a sound with more body in it, though low and almost inaudible. The sailor lifted his head, tossing his uncomfortable turban backward and then making a sudden grip at it. He sniffed the air strongly, sniffed it as a dog does, and then gave vent to a deep exclamation.

"It's breakers ahead, gentlemen—Mr. Smallweed, sir," he cried. "Breakers, or I'm a lubber. That there sound comes from over starboard way, and it'll be from the ocean."

There was silence for a while, during which all listened. Then Dereck supported Jack with vigour.

"The sea, sure enough," he said, shifting his position a little and nursing his wounded arm, for the rough motion of the camel he rode had caused him no little pain. "The sea. Then we must have swung round a little," he told them.

"Or the land cuts back just here," ventured Claude. "That'd bring about the same effect. In any case, we're near the shore, and if those are sand-dunes yonder, then it helps to prove the case. Well, Alphonse?"

It seemed natural to turn to the Frenchman, though a week before he would have been the very last amongst this party to whom they would have referred. But, then, they were wiser now, and knew that their comrade had, in spite of his quiet and somewhat effeminate way, a rich store of knowledge.

"Well?" demanded Hal, supporting his cousin. "You've been in these parts before, and ought to know whether that's a good sign or not; whether

we're lucky to find ourselves near the coast-line, or whether it would be better to be far inland."

"Precisely. And I can say at once that we are lucky. If I had to cross this desert alone I'd select the coast route every time. You see," explained Alphonse, "there are three routes, and the one running parallel to the sea is about the shortest and the safest —that is, in peace times; for there are wells to be found, and there is no chance of losing the way. The track makes clear across for El Kantara, just above Ismailia, and of course, as we know, our troops are just opposite that point, merely separated from it by the Canal. As to the wells, they were long ago blown up by our people, while in places an attacking force making use of the coast track could be shelled by our war vessels."

"Which ain't likely to hurt us," said Dereck emphatically. "Wish they'd come along as we march! It'd cause a sensation; though I'd rather get through with the journey, for then we'd be able to say that we'd done it without help, and had been clean across this old desert. Besides, we'd bring in our camels, too, and it'd be fine to have some trophies."

Claude grinned at his sailor cousin. "I ain't so keen on the camels," he told him bluntly. "Nasty, grunting, biting brutes. Still, one doesn't want to be ungrateful, and if we get 'em across, why, Dereck, you can have mine with pleasure. But about these other routes, Alphonse?"

"Well, there are about two practical ways across— old pilgrim ways, you know, one leading from Akaba to Suez. That ain't likely to be used by the Turks,

for our Indian troops already hold Akaba. So they will have to make a straight line right across, or they'll take the coast route we've been speaking about. That's our greatest danger. We needn't fear for water, for the camels have drunk their fill, and won't require more than to have their mouths washed out in the next twenty-four hours. Besides, we have those water-bags, and they will keep men and animals going for three days at least. By then we'll be in clover."

"Or in the hands of the enemy," Hal gently told them. "However, we'll put up a good fight if they turn up. So we go by the coast route, eh?"

"Of course," declared Dereck. "Alphonse evidently thinks it best, and here it is, right beside us. As to meeting the enemy, of course I ain't saying I would like to walk slap-bang into the midst of an army—oh, no! But it would be fine to have a brush with 'em, a kind of action all to ourselves—a special engagement, you might term it. Wonder what the Admiralty would do? They'd have to recognize it, eh?—issue a special bar to be attached to our medals. Ever thought how jolly it'll be to wear a medal?"

Who hadn't? For if there is one thing that a soldier or a sailor covets when he is young, it is something to show that he has seen service. But it was early days to give the matter more than a passing thought, as Claude hinted to his enthusiastic cousin.

"Special bar be hanged, Dereck!" he laughed. "Let's get through first of all, and then we can consider the matter. Besides, this war isn't over yet. Folks say we shall try to break through at the Dardanelles. That'd mean heaps of fighting."

"For the Navy, yes," agreed Dereck, as they once more put their mounts in motion. "The Navy'd tackle that job single-handed."

"Might; might not," the New Zealander answered. "I've heard lots of fellows arguing about it. There are some who consider that the many strong forts the Turks possess would require the co-operation of a force on land to aid the British and French navies. You see, the Dardanelles is a narrow streak of water which flows out from the Sea of Marmora and from the Black Sea at a rapid rate, and is enclosed on either side by high cliffs dominating the water. A ship making her way up would have to face mine-fields, for we know that they are laid. She'd be under the fire of huge fortress guns, and within range of torpedoes sent off from the shore. It's true that she could lie off the Gallipoli peninsula and bombard the forts along either side of The Narrows—the part that is most heavily armed and the narrow channel which will take the most getting through. But modern forts can't always be seen and located. It would be a question whether all the guns had been destroyed. You'd lose ships in trying to find that out, you know. However, that's all for the future. I reckon we've as big a job as we want for the present."

"Hear, hear!" came from Hal. "And we're certain to be followed."

"Are certain to have been followed already," Alphonse told them, setting a brisker pace. "That old chief will never rest till he has captured us. We've given him, as it were, a severe blow in the face. His prestige will have received a nasty shock, and he'll

feel that he's got to secure us before he can face his tribe again. That's Arab logic. As to Otto Scholz, I needn't mention that traitor. You know what he's got to face if we get through. Egypt'll be a closed book to him in future. So, even if the old chief were to weaken, Otto will stir the Turks and their vassal Arabs to tremendous efforts. Come along. This moon is splendid."

No doubt indeed that they would be followed. If Dereck and his friends could have stood outside that oasis in which they had first taken shelter when arriving in Palestine, they would have been vastly interested. For there was no hoodwinking the old chief whom they had liberated, nor, as we have explained, was there any likelihood of his allowing his feelings of hatred for the infidel to alter. An Arab is an Arab to the end of his days. Want of generosity is but natural to him in warfare. He can be chivalrous, like the British—indeed, he understands that virtue thoroughly. But generosity to an enemy is beyond his code.

Hardly half an hour had elapsed from the moment at which that line of camels issued so silently into the desert, when the chief smelled a rat.

"Those figures yonder which we see moving across the fire in the oasis bring suspicion to my mind," he told the German bluntly. "They are so near to the ground, so low down. They cannot be the figures of men, for then they would be crawling. Ah! there were goats in the place. I heard their bleating. Then —infidel, listen! Once more I will go forward. If you hear a shot, then you will know that the enemy

is still before us. But if I call, then indeed you will learn that the worst has happened, and that those infidels have broken out into the desert."

It was less than ten minutes later that Otto Scholz heard the old man call, and realized that he had been worsted. And hardly half an hour had passed after that when the patrol of Turkish cavalry which Dereck and his friends had met rode up to the oasis.

"They are gone. You say that you have allowed these enemies to escape," cried their officer, when the facts of the case had been explained to him. "But how? When? Whither? Surely there has been gross carelessness! But wait! Did we not meet a party mounted on camels when on our way here?"

An under-officer answered him in the affirmative. "They were riding toward the desert," he said. "Their chief came out to meet me and conversed. He reported that the enemy were then within the oasis, and that he and his men were watching in case they should escape."

"Their chief! An old man, then?" demanded the aged chief whom Dereck and his friends had set at liberty. "Tell me," he demanded, thrusting his bristling beard almost into the face of the man who had spoken; "this man—this chief—was he old or young? and did he speak with the voice of one of my age or with that of a youth? Quick! The plan becomes clear to me. These men captured camels. There were five of them."

"There were five of these men whom we met," came the answer. "As to the chief, he was a fine fellow, well set up, broad and strong and young——"

The cry to which the aged chief gave vent positively startled the treacherous Otto. Not that the Arab was given to showing his feelings. Indeed, Arab-like, he was a sphinx at most times, and even his face did not betray his thoughts. But this—this was too much, too humiliating, too hard to be borne! His eyes were blazing as they had never blazed before, while he hissed his words at the Turk standing before him.

"And—and you did not see, did not suspect, did not know that this chief, this well-set-up young man was an impostor, was one of the hated infidels!" he cried, with difficulty restraining himself from striking the fellow. "You did not realize that he was an enemy, and that he and his party were the men we hoped to capture. Perhaps you conversed with him? By Allah, it may happen next that we shall hear that you told him of our movements, of our plans, of the Sultan's intentions!"

Never was there such wrath, and if it had been broad daylight, instead of night-time, though a pale moon helped them a little to see their surroundings, the unfortunate under-officer would have been staggered and frightened. But there was never the best of feelings between Arab and Turk, and no Turk would allow himself to be browbeaten by an Arab.

"Cease!" cried the Turkish commanding officer. "Let the patrol dismount, and do you, Ussuf, see that girths are loosened and water given to the beasts. Now, Chief, the mischief has been done. It was an error, I admit, and a most unfortunate one. But, then, it is not the only error that has been committed. You sent for our help, telling us that you had some

of these infidel dogs cornered in an oasis. But they had been too strong for you, eh?"

"Allah knows it. Of a truth they fought well and gamely. They met our rushes with their fire, though they had but two rifles of their own and one older weapon. They killed and wounded my men and captured camels. They were too strong for us, and for that reason I sent for aid. And now——"

"And now that it is come we discover this other error," said the Turkish officer dryly. "The enemy, to capture whom we rode here as fast as horse could take us, is here no longer. You, who should have watched and made escape impossible, have let them through. We, who believed you to be watching carefully, met these same men, it seems, disguised as a band of Arabs. There is fault on both sides, seeing that we did not suspect. It is then the wish of Allah. They shall not escape us, and soon we shall shoot them out in the desert. Come, let us discuss measures. Horses will be useless in the desert, and this seems to me to be the work for men of your nation. Let us return to head-quarters. There you shall rest and feed and refresh yourself. Then, with men mounted on camels, and you and the German at their head, you will ride far and fast into the plain of El Tih, where you will assuredly come upon these invaders."

The speech mollified the old chief to some extent, so much so that he gave up muttering. Soon he was mounted on a camel, and within three hours was with the Turkish army. But the following day was but five hours old when he set out with some twenty followers, amongst them the traitor Otto, and taking

a track across the arid country lying between the oasis and the coast-line, soon struck upon the tracks left by Dereck and his party.

"See, they lead straight on," he told the German. "But as yet it may well be that these men do not know their exact position. They are strangers in this land, and it is a strange land in which to make a journey. Even I, who am old, have difficulty sometimes in discovering my direction, and am puzzled as to whether I am making straight for my destination. Then consider the case of these infidels. They march west, knowing only that in that quarter lies Egypt. But they do not know and cannot guess what is before them. The desert is a sealed book to most men, and even we Arabs do not often attempt to cross it. Of a surety we shall come upon them soon, when Allah will reward us."

It was late in the evening before this pursuing party reached the long strip of green where Dereck and his friends had halted, and though the chief caused a thorough search of the oasis to be made, no trace of the infidels could be discovered.

"It is too dark to discover traces of them," he told himself consolingly. "Even the moon will not help us beneath the trees, though it may show their tracks out in the desert. Here we will halt till day dawn, when we will set out after them. Bah! How I long to slay the whole party!"

If Otto had been consulted he would have been able to tell the chief that he was even more anxious. For in the treacherous mind of the German there was an ever-growing fear of the consequences of this strange

meeting in the desert. A little while ago he had sought the death of his French cousin and of his friends, solely for the reason that they might betray him should he return to Egypt. But Otto had been thinking matters over in his calculating, cunning manner, and had come to one particular resolution.

"Of what use to return to Egypt?" he had asked himself, "at least, of what benefit could it be to me at this moment? Later, when the British are beaten and we Germans sit astride the Canal, thus preventing the British from drawing troops from India, then I can return and claim the business of my respected uncle. Till then, there is work to be done elsewhere. Why not at the Dardanelles? They say that the British are preparing an attack. Now a friend of Great Britain might learn tidings of those preparations, might gather news of ships and guns and men, and could pass them to the German officer in command of the Turkish armies. Yes, whether Alphonse lives or dies—and I have little fear that he will safely cross the desert—Egypt shall not see me for a while. There are bigger fish to fry in the neighbourhood of Constantinople."

Otto was nothing if not a careful person. And, moreover, as he had told himself, and, indeed, thoroughly expected, there would be little need for his services even were he to return to Egypt. For one brief moment let us consider the question of the country in which Alphonse had spent his life, the ancient lands of the Pharaohs. Everyone knows well that Monsieur de Lesseps and the French constructed that giant canal which cuts across the desert of El

Tih and provides a watery lane between the Mediterranean Sea and the Gulf of Suez. Bitter lakes which lie toward the southern end of the desert made this gigantic feat of engineering far less difficult than it might have been, while the even level of the waters of the Mediterranean and of the Red Sea made it possible to construct a canal through which no current flowed and in the course of which no locks were necessary.

It will be of value at this point to compare this engineering feat with that of one just completed. We refer to the Panama Canal, an undertaking beside which the cutting of the Suez Canal pales into insignificance. For Panama is not Egypt, and the natural features found in the desert of El Tih, those bitter lakes to wit, which shortened the work of excavation, are wanting entirely where the Americans have been labouring. Indeed, it may be safely asserted that whereas de Lesseps had a straightforward task to accomplish, and was hampered by little worse than heat and lack of drinking water, America has had to face a battery of difficulties. We said that Panama is not Egypt. The isthmus of Panama, stretching between Mexico and South America, lies in an area where volcanic convulsions are to be anticipated. Thus a canal might be wrecked before it was even completed. Then the isthmus is—or shall we say was? for America has utterly changed the condition of the canal zone—the home of yellow fever and of malaria. So much was this the case that de Lesseps, who, tempted by his success in Europe, and emboldened by the experience he had obtained in that continent, attempted to cut a canal across this same

isthmus of Panama, was defeated by the condition to which we have referred. His workmen died by the score. He abandoned the work, indeed, leaving little but a cemetery behind him.

Add, then, to the above natural difficulties which America faced, and faced so successfully, the fact that the Pacific and the Atlantic oceans are not of even level, so that locks were inevitable. Moreover, the isthmus is not a mere sandy, level track, stretching between the oceans. It is almost mountainous, the scene at times of excessive rainfall, and offers not so much as a lake to shorten the road from one ocean to the other. Yet the feat has been accomplished. A wide valley has been dammed, and the waters of the rivers of this part of the isthmus trapped. To either end of this vast lake canals have been led from the sea, numbers of gigantic locks being constructed. Thus America, and other nations too, can now reach the Pacific coasts of North and South America without the need to send their ships right round Cape Horn, a journey of great extent and sometimes, even in these days of steam, of considerable danger.

This short reference to the Panama Canal has shown, perhaps, the value and difficulties of such an undertaking. But the contrast we have drawn is not complete unless one mentions the fact—a fact of huge importance in the gigantic European War—that the Suez Canal is Britain's short cut from home waters to India. Who knows, those crafty, scheming war-lords who advised the Kaiser may long since have set their eyes on Turkey for one reason above all others? We do not profess to make the statement that there were

no other reasons why the Sultan should be dragged into the conflict, and that the scheming of the Germans had no other object: yet this is clear. Turkey has access to the Suez Canal, and, indeed, was at the commencement of the war suzerain power over Egypt. A blow, then, on the part of Turkey might perhaps cut this all-important link in Britain's line of communication, and thereby delay, if it did not absolutely prevent, the arrival of reinforcements from India. More than that, supposing the war to have gone as Germany had intended, and France and Russia to have been crushed in the first few months of the conflict, then Germany, using Turkey as her tool, might have seized the Suez Canal and held it while she devoted her attention to India, thus severed from the mother country.

To realize the importance of Egypt to the British at this moment one needs to take a wide view of the conflict, and to realize what plans Germany had made when she and Austria first declared war on France and Russia. The disgraceful tale is old now, of how these central Powers of Europe found a pretext for war by preparing a punitive expedition against Serbia, and how that threat and the commencement of its execution forced Russia, the natural protector of Serbia—seeing that Serbians are all Slavs and closely related to Russians—to come to their assistance. France, being allied with Russia, was of necessity drawn into the conflict, while Britain in those first few hours of August, 1914, looked on, a prey to uneasiness and anxiety. Then followed the invasion of Belgium, a treacherous act on the part of Germany

—an act, indeed, of the utmost dishonour, seeing that the Kaiser and his ministers had signed an international treaty promising always to respect the integrity of that nation.

We need not dwell too closely on the numerous events which followed, for it will be within the mind of all that, following plans made by her war-lords years before, Germany at once set to work to carry out a most complete programme. To crush her enemies in detail and before they were prepared for her onslaught was her one ambition, and amongst her enemies now she had to number Great Britain. For that invasion of Belgium was a *casus belli* between the two nations. Britain was one of the countries which had sworn to respect and to maintain the integrity of Belgium, and seeing that Germany had torn that treaty into shreds, and that Belgium called out for succour, Britain made no hesitation as to her action. By the 4th of August she was at war with these central Powers of Europe, and before half the month was gone had commenced to land an expeditionary force in France.

We have said that Germany's ambition was to crush her enemies in detail and before they were ready, and she set about this task in the manner already mentioned. She took the shortest road for Paris, rushing her troops across Belgium. But there she was faced by the gallant King Albert and his soldiers, and, though vastly inferior in numbers and in preparation, they drove so hard at the Prussians that the avalanche of grey-coated men was arrested. More than that, the Belgians dealt so severely with

the German invaders that their plans and their programme were upset completely. Without attempting details, we may simply mention that the mad rush of the enemy was delayed—delayed by a few days only, perhaps, but yet delayed; and that delay gave time for France to make ready, to mobilize her troops, to withdraw those army corps sent already to her eastern frontier. It gave time, too, for Britain to place her expeditionary force alongside that of France, and for the united forces to make ready to face the enemy.

But it is not our purpose here to follow the events of the opening of this mighty conflict. We have said that Germany had a plan, and that plan was to crush the Allies in detail. First France, and with her, Great Britain's army in the field, seeing that she had now joined in with Germany's enemies; then Russia. The network of railways crossing Germany would easily allow of this, providing the intelligence service of the Kaiser and his war-lords had been accurate. For in Germany it was taken to be quite certain that Russia —slow, ponderous Russia—would take weeks to effect her mobilization. Well then, when six weeks had passed Germany would, thanks to the short cut she proposed to take through Belgium—and whether the Belgians liked it or not, whether they welcomed the hosts of the Kaiser or opposed them made little difference, seeing how insignificant they were to the lordly Prussians—by the end of six weeks Germany would have crushed France, would be in possession of Paris, would control the seaports facing England, and would be in a position to force France to do her bidding. Then those railways would sweep the Ger-

man hosts across to Russia, where Austrian troops would have been watching the hurried preparations of the enemy; and in her turn Russia would be crushed into obedience.

What next? Would Germany be satisfied? Would the Kaiser, now Kaiser of the majority of Europe, be satisfied with his position? Of a surety no. This scheme of Germany embraced far bigger things—no less an ambition than the conquest of all nations. There was Britain, for instance, her army in France already beaten; there was Britain's fleet, and there were Britain's numerous colonies. Let no one doubt the fact that all these matters had been taken into consideration and duly discussed by the Kaiser and his advisers. Britain was an ugly customer to tackle, and, moreover, by the time France had been crushed into obedience, and Russia also, she would have made preparations for warfare on a large scale. But here it was that German cunning was to come into the scheme; it is at this point that we again hark back to the Suez Canal and to the Turkish allies of the Germans. Britain's fleets could be mastered by the combined fleets of Germany, France, and Russia, for the last two countries would have been forced to consent to this measure. Thus occupied, Britain could not render aid to her many dependencies. There was India, the brightest jewel in her crown; there were Australia, New Zealand, Canada, and many another smiling country. Turn alone to the East for a moment. If the Turks could be induced to join hands with the Germans and capture the Suez Canal, Britain could not succour her Eastern possessions

even if she had the means with which to do so. Nor could her children from overseas obey the call of the mother country and rush to her assistance, save, perhaps, from Canada. Mother and children were, in fact, totally to be separated by this wily scheme of bringing the Turk into the conflict, and once separated, the original plan of the cunning Teuton could once more be put into operation. What more easy, when this separation had been effected, and the Canal and Egypt firmly held, than to attack and beat these enemies in detail, to smash the people of the United Kingdom—those arrogant, stiff-necked people—and then turn upon her children overseas and secure there the prize on which the Kaiser and people of the Fatherland had for many a year cast covetous glances? As for the rest of the world, were there not thousands of German settlers in every settled country? Was not the German War Office already and long since prepared for the invasion and conquest of America, and with it of Canada? Let the European allies fall, and soon America would be as German as Germany. No Atlantic Ocean could prevent it. Nothing could prevent it but the defeat of the Kaiser and his warlike people.

One word more and we have done for the moment with Turkey. If other reasons be sought for her inclusion in the war on the side of Germany, it is to be found in her position astride the Dardanelles, astride the natural outlet and inlet of the Black Sea, the only outlet possible to Russia throughout the seasons. Close the Dardanelles, and Russia is starved of imports during the winter; open it, and Russia is

in close touch with the Mediterranean. It is a point worth emphasizing, for we shall see that, once Turkey had been drawn into the fighting on the side of our enemies, it became urgent that Britain and France should break asunder the Turkish chain hemming in their Russian ally. Nor was the reason alone that we might obtain possession of her enormous grain supplies. We were anxious to offer an exchange, an exchange in the shape of munitions. For let it be remembered that Russia is not a manufacturing country. She grows grain in quantity, and she is thickly populated. There were men there in abundance, but guns, rifles, ammunition—the items so absolutely vital to modern warfare — were lacking. The supply of these to Russia in return for grain would arm a multitude to fight for the ultimate triumph of the Allies.

It was late in the afternoon of the night following their entry into the desert that Dereck and his comrades became aware of the fact that they were being closely followed. All that previous night they had pressed their camels forward, halting them for a few minutes every now and again. And during the heat of the day they had rested for longer periods, realizing that if they were pursued the freshness of their camels might mean life to them. Now, far away still, they caught sight of enemies swarming across the horizon.

"Kind of thing we expected," announced Mr. Midshipman Smallweed. "Claude, I'll thank you to put another dressing on my arm when next we halt. It's getting stiff and almost useless, and that won't do, for we're in for a bit of a tussle with those beggars."

CHAPTER X

A Fight to a Finish

OUT of the waste of sand lying to the east there rode a cavalcade of men mounted on camels. Dereck could see them plainly, and even detect the presence amongst them of the German who had once posed as a friend of Great Britain. Great though the distance was that divided the forlorn little party of five of which the fugitives consisted and that pursuing squadron, the brightness of the sand and the brilliance of the desert made it possible even to detect the ungainly helmet that Otto Scholz boasted; and ahead of the cavalcade, mounted on a camel of gigantic proportions, was the chief, that venomous old man whom Alphonse and his friends had treated with such kindness.

Alphonse pulled in his camel with a jerk, and turning round in his saddle, took a long look at the pursuers through his glasses; then he shut them with a snap, and turned to his comrades.

"Twenty-five of 'em," he told them, his lips smiling and his deep-set eyes flashing in a manner which was most unusual. "Mounted on the best camels the Sultan possesses; my glasses show them to be as fresh as paint, and those men the old chief has managed to get together are armed to the teeth and look as though

they carry modern rifles. H'm! Looks like a case of fighting, you fellows."

There was silence for a while, during which all five members of the party stared across the sandy, flashing desert at the squadron coming so rapidly towards them. Who could say what thoughts flashed through the minds of each, or how Jack or Claude or Hal and their comrades viewed the situation? Their bronzed faces, their staring eyes showed not a sign of their feelings; but the firm lips, the set, square chins of every one of them, and the poise of their bodies seemed to show that fear, at least, did not oppress them. Claude gave a little laugh, and turned as if by instinct to Alphonse.

"Looks like being in the soup again," he said. "Twenty-five of 'em! My word! that will take some doing. But——"

"But we licked twelve before," Hal chimed in with vigour, unhooking his rifle and beginning to open the breech-lock. "What's twenty-five? Only a little more than double that number; and if we take that German skunk to be the odd man of the bunch, why, he is not worth counting. Only, of course, we can't put up a fight worth talking about out here in the open. I suppose a fellow could make his camel kneel down, and in that way we could arrange a sort of zareba all round us; but then if the brutes were not shot at the very first opening of the engagement, they'd be squalling and kicking and biting all the time, to say nothing of stampeding. The chances are they'd do more damage to us than we should to the enemy, so that's a plan that don't seem very likely."

"Well," argued Mr. Midshipman Smallweed, turning to the Frenchman, just as Claude and Hal had done—indeed, just as all of them felt impelled to do—"you know these fellows, Alphonse; you have lived amongst them all your life; suggest something. Hal was perfectly right: we ain't frightened of fighting twenty-four of 'em, or twenty-five, if you like to count in that German; but a fellow wants some sort of cover. Where's it to be found here? Don't look like it, do it? Of course we might dig trenches, but this sand is so soft and dry that it falls in upon you before you have got deep enough to give cover to your body. I suppose we couldn't——"

"Yes, we could," snapped Alphonse, turning his eyes towards the sand-dunes, on the far side of which the dull booming of the sea could be heard on occasions. "Half-right turn, you fellows, kick your camels, send 'em along; if there isn't a hollow up there amongst those dunes that will give us cover, then there ought to be."

No further orders were given, nor were any needed. It was clear to the whole party that out there in the midst of that awful sandy desert they could have no chance against the cavalcade of Arabs bearing down so remorselessly upon them. Were they to stay out there in the open, common sense told them they would be overridden by sheer weight of camels, and that no effort on their part could keep the enemy at a distance. As a last resort they might have adopted the plan suggested by Hal, and have formed their camels into a circle about them; but then, would they offer great protection? Supposing they even went so far

as to shoot the unfortunate beasts once they had got them into position, would five dead camels lying about them protect them from the bullets of those Arabs, or prevent the enemy from rushing in and shooting them at close quarters?

"Jolly good suggestion, but hopeless," Claude shouted to his cousin as they thumped along over the desert. "If there ain't a hollow amongst those sand-dunes, however, we'll have to adopt it. But there's sure to be some sort of cover up here, and if only we can get a ridge of sand to afford us some protection, we'll put up a fight that will make that old Arab chief sorry he was ever so vindictive. Hello, Dereck, what about that arm? Wait until we get into position, and then I'll see to it for you. Hurting, eh?"

"Not a bit of it," the jovial midshipman shouted back; but there was a pallor about his lips and cheeks that belied his words, while there was a heaviness about his eyes which even Claude, who was not apt to take notice of trifles, could not help observing. But if Dereck was suffering pain, if the wound he had received and the jolting of the camel were helping to make him feel faint, his cheerfulness and his courage at least showed no signs of deserting him; he even grinned back at his cousin and winked violently. Then, kicking his camel, he led the way over the first ridge of the sand-dunes, and pulling up on the very summit of one of the hillocks, shouted: "The sea, hooray! Wish the dickens there was a boat on it!"

"Halt!" Alphonse gave the order with a snap and a precision which would have done justice to a military commander. He was amazing, this Frenchman;

even there, in the excitement of the moment, with that cavalcade of Arabs so hotly pursuing them, Claude could not help but cast his thoughts back to the time, so very few days earlier, when Alphonse had appeared as a youth incapable of decision, incapable of giving even so much as an order, a weakling indeed, a "mother's darling", never to be trusted. But now, as he and his three companions knew thoroughly, there had been a vast change in their opinions.

"What fools we were!" he could not help muttering as he jerked the head-cord of his camel. "What blind idiots! Though a chap must admit that Alphonse in his tattered European dress was a totally different Alphonse from this Arab fellow. Even so, he proved his value right away from the first, when that storm was brewing; and, by Jove! he has been virtually the leader ever since that moment."

"Ride the camels down to the bottom of the slope," commanded Alphonse suddenly; "now shout at them to kneel. That's the way, Dereck. There's the hollow we'll hold; and as you're a naval officer, skilled in such matters, you'll decide what positions we'll take up and what plan we'll follow to beat off these fellows. Meanwhile, Jack and I will unload the camels and carry our stuff into the hollow. Quick's the word! Those Arabs are coming up with a rush, now that they see the game we're after."

By dint of lusty jerks at the head-ropes of the animals they rode, the five contrived to get them kneeling. Dereck leapt from his saddle, and, seizing his rifle and a bag of ammunition, dashed into the hollow alongside which Alphonse had halted the

party. Claude and Hal followed their cousin instantly, and together the three clambered up the far side of the hollow till their heads were just above the ridge of sand which formed the sky-line. To their left and right sand-dunes were thrown up in all directions, hollowed and roughened in a thousand places by the late storm which had been the cause of their misfortunes. Here and there tufts of sea-grass issued from the dry sand which went to form these hillocks, but for the most part they were utterly bare, smooth, and rounded, dimpled in a hundred places, cast into numbers of pinnacles by the wind-draughts, and flattened and dug into hollows in other places.

At their back lay the sea, an immense expanse of deep, blue water, as smooth as any lake, as tranquil as a village pond in some old rustic retreat back in England. Indeed, that mighty expanse of emerald-blue water looked on this day as if it were incapable of being anything else than smooth and tranquil; yet little more than a week ago the storm had raged across it, and that placid surface had been stirred into huge, breaking billows, and a roaring, raging surf had beaten upon the smooth stretch of yellow beach lying down below them. It seemed impossible, yet it was so; and the mass of sand-dunes stretching to right and left of them, presenting a barrier between ocean and desert, was an illustration in itself of the tempests which burst at times upon this coast-line. For the rest, in front of them lay the desert, that terrible desert, a mighty length of yellow, useless land which was a friend to none and an enemy always to those who ventured upon it. What tragedies had it not

witnessed in days gone by—in those remote days when the tribes of Egypt and all the warriors of the Euphrates warred together! What armies had it not seen plodding silently across it, and what stragglers had it not gripped and smothered! Yet on this day, like that smiling ocean behind them, the desert appeared to Dereck and his two cousins as a pleasant picture. The sun, low in the heavens behind them, cast long shadows of the high sand-dunes across the sandy waste, and lit up high mountains in the far distance, lit them up so brilliantly and so clearly that they appeared to be within almost easy walk of them.

Nor was this desert tenantless, for across it came twenty-five men who now shouted and shrieked as they came within easy distance of the infidels whom they were following. Thanks to the brilliant rays of that falling sun, their faces even were now visible; and so clear is the atmosphere in the desert that Dereck could even detect the fierce, vindictive face of the old chief who led them. As for Otto Scholz, he appeared to be snarling; but that may have been pure imagination, though in any case there was little doubt that the German would not have improved much in appearance since the middy and his comrades had given him the slip from the oasis. Indeed, this traitor was peering from beneath his helmet at the sand-dunes, muttering curses at the sudden disappearance of the enemy, and wondering where on earth they could have got to.

"They have gone, gone!" he shouted, ranging his camel beside that of the chief and pointing towards the sand-dunes excitedly; "but where? Do you

think that a ship is out there at sea, and that they have signalled to her? Then they will escape after all, and will carry the news to Egypt."

A growl escaped the chief, and for one brief second he faced the German and flashed at him a look which spoke volumes; yet so dense was this treacherous Teuton, and so wrapped up was he in his own concerns and his own immediate interests, that he failed to see in those flashing eyes, those scowling brows, and those fine, curling lips of the Arab a contempt which was unutterable. It was perhaps as well for the success of the pursuers that the infidel riding amongst them should have been ignorant of their true feelings for him, for, indeed, German and Briton alike are equally infidel to these sons of the desert.

Though Otto Scholz followed the cause of that powerful ally of the Turks away in Europe, though he was wedded to their interests, yet the fact remained that he was a heathen dog, an infidel, an unbeliever; and being such, he was beneath the contempt of all true believers. Yet there are degrees of believers; there are Arabs whose feelings and whose thoughts follow a different plane from those possessed by the better-born amongst them. There were some, no doubt, amongst the old chief's followers who were ready to put up with this German, this infidel, even though he were an unbeliever; but then, as we have inferred, they may have been of different moulding altogether, and moreover, unlike the fiery chief who commanded them, they had had no opportunity of obtaining an insight into the character of this traitor. To them he was merely an infidel, an ally, one of that

race of whose growing power the Turks had told them. To the chief he was a treacherous dog whose very presence was irksome; still, being an ally, some respect was due to him, and even in the act of replying to the Teuton's call with bitterness the chief bit the words off before they were uttered, and satisfied himself instead with a scowl, the meaning of which was plain to everyone but the German.

"Gone?" he said, and his words almost trembled with suppressed vindictiveness. "Nay, by Allah, the sand-dunes alone have hidden them! Behind there is the blue ocean, oh infidel, as you have mentioned already, but no ship lies upon it; and these five whom we follow, and whom we will slay before the sun has finished setting, have signalled to none of their comrades. Be easy in your mind. I will so dispose my men that they and the sand-dunes will engulf these enemies; then shall we who are not placed as sentries about them dismount, and taking advantage of the hollows, advance till close up to the lair chosen by these men who have dared to invade this country. Give thanks to Allah; already the infidels are in our hands. I myself will slay that one who passed himself off as chief of the party, and who, if I mistake not, was their leader and the cause of our undoing."

With a sharp pull of the rope he caused his camel to come to an abrupt stop, and swinging round gave utterance to a fierce order. Rapidly he spoke to his men, firing commands at them like pistol-shots; and very soon four of the riders on either flank of the party broke away from their comrades. Separating,

they dashed away towards the sand-dunes, and in a little while were disposed round the spot where Dereck and his friends had taken refuge. Then another order issued from the lips of the chief, and within a few seconds seventeen camels, upon which he and the others who remained with him were mounted, were kneeling on the desert sand, and their riders were dismounting.

It was a wonderful sight, and added to the picture presented to the eyes of the young Britons watching the desert from their hollow in the sand-dunes.

"Regular show," grinned Dereck, nudging his comrades; "might almost imagine you were at a picture palace, or a Buffalo-Bill sort of entertainment. Ain't they a picture, those Arabs, and don't they handle their camels as if they were brothers? Well, there are seventeen of them, counting the German, and as we have said before, you can leave him out; being what he is, he'll take jolly good care that his skin doesn't come into any sort of danger, though I must confess he made a rattling good charge when we were away in that oasis. As to the chief, he is all fire and brimstone, and I am afraid we shall just have to pot him. I hate the thought, but then he really is such a vindictive old gentleman. Now, how's our quartermaster doing?"

He swung round with a careless laugh to see what Alphonse and the sailor had been doing, and discovered that in the few minutes that had passed since the party reached the sand-dunes the two had removed the water-bottles and bags of food from the saddles, and had placed them at the bottom of the

hollow; then they had thrown off the lashings of the saddles, and were at that moment engaged in drawing them from the bodies of the camels.

"Why?" asked Claude, turning as his cousin had done. "Saddles! This isn't a case of riding; it's a case for rifles, and jolly soon, too, by the look of things."

Alphonse winked. It was the first time any of them had observed such a flippant action on the part of the Frenchman. He appeared now to be more than usually elated, and, as we know, he was the last of this party of five as a general rule to show any sort of feeling; indeed, he was in such ways more nearly allied to the Arabs whom he so cleverly represented.

"Saddles," he exclaimed, with another wink; "just so. No riding now, you say, but rifles? Well, I thought that saddles might possibly come in very useful. You see, Claude, saddles are rounded at the top and hollow underneath where they go on the back of the animal, and as a rule they are built up on a metal base, which makes 'em quite decent bullet protectors. Now, there being five of 'em, if we allow that they might stop a bullet there are five bullet-shields here in the hollow, one for every man-jack of us. If we stick 'em up on end and prop 'em well in the sand, it won't be much of a job to make a port-hole underneath 'em, and from that we can fire on the enemy without their seeing us. They'll see the saddles all right, and the next men who ride them will find the leather cut into ribbons most likely, but then it mightn't be us, you see. Besides, I'd rather ride a camel bareback and sacrifice the saddle than have an Arab bullet buzzing in my turban."

"Get in at it!" shouted Dereck, seizing one of the saddles at once and propping it into position. "The very thing, Alphonse; you're a splendid fellow. I'm quite sure I should never have thought of that."

"Which ain't so wonderful," quizzed Claude, laughing at his cousin; "you see, Dereck, my dear, delightful middy, you're a sailor, and sailors don't have much to do with saddles. But, really, ain't it a splendid idea? That's the way, boys, and we may go one better."

"How?" demanded Hal, who like his cousin had also seized a saddle. Indeed, by now every one of the party was busily at work preparing a defensive position for his own particular person. Not that all these posts were chosen haphazard, for on the contrary, Dereck, who had now assumed command of the party, rapidly pointed out to each one a favourable position. Let us say at once that the Hon. Dereck Smallweed displayed at this instant a really masterful manner. Still bearing one arm in a sling, though every now and again he flung the sling aside and used his damaged limb when there was occasion, he stood on a little parapet of sand which he had kicked and carried into position, and which just allowed his head to appear above the top of the hollow. From this commanding post he was able to look out over the desert, over the surrounding sand-dunes, and away back to the placid, smiling ocean—that ocean that was the life of this gallant middy. It became apparent, now that the party were really face to face with the enemy, that once more they had to thank Alphonse for quick intuition. That swift glance

which he had given toward the sand-dunes, when he had commanded the party to "half-right turn" and kick their camels into active movement, had fastened upon this particular spot—a spot where the winds, seizing upon the millions of sand grains throughout centuries, perhaps, had tossed them higher and higher till they formed a mighty mass that overshadowed the others. Was it pure luck that had caused Alphonse's eye to fasten upon that mass and had led him to it? And was it mere chance or an act of Providence that had discovered on the summit of what at a distance had appeared to be a mere tapering pinnacle a hollow, a deep hollow, wide enough and big enough to accommodate double the size of their party, yet not so wide and not so big that those five solitary individuals could not defend it.

"How," shouted Hal again, plucking Claude by a portion of his ample white robing, "how are we to go one better? These saddles are simply splendid."

"How? Just so!" said Claude laconically. "Stick 'em up on end and wedge 'em well into the sand, then throw the stuff up in front of 'em, and pat it down, and scrape more and throw it in between 'em. Busy with it, boys! These Arab beggars aren't yet in sight, and will be wondering what we are doing. If we can finish the job before they can get sufficiently near, all they will see will be a ridge of smooth sand, and they won't guess that behind the ridge are five bullet-stoppers at intervals."

The five minutes that followed were indeed exceedingly busy ones for every member of the party, for Claude's idea had obviously common sense to

support it. It was a plan which offered every chance of protection to the defenders of this tiny hollow, and which might be expected to baffle the Arabs exceedingly. So dexterous were they, and so rapidly did they work, that in spite of the fact that Dereck had but one hand to use—for prolonged movement of his damaged limb was quite impossible—their task was completed; the parapet of sand raised round the edge of the hollow looked quite natural, and beneath the saddles holes had been bored through which their rifles could fire upon the enemy. Meanwhile Dereck, acknowledging, with a grimace and an exclamation of disgust, that facts were too strong for him, had thrust his damaged arm into the sling again, and taking one of the rifles had pushed it into position. Then, tearing his turban from his head—an act which each one of the others followed—he peered over the top of their barricade and watched closely for the enemy.

"Look out, down with your napper! Beg pardon, Mr. Smallweed, sir," apologized gallant Jack Barnsby a moment after he had shouted the warning. Indeed, his warning came just in time, for hardly had Dereck ducked behind the parapet when a sharp report reached their ears from a distant hollow, and clouds of sand swept over the party.

"Right over there, sir," explained Jack, darting to Dereck's side and peering over the parapet; "I spied one of those ugly beggars just behind a ridge of sand yonder. G'me a rifle, sir, and I'll see what I can do for 'im."

"And you other fellows had best get to your loop-

holes," commanded Dereck; "bullets are likely to be flying, and we none of us are anxious to get killed at this stage of the proceedings."

"That's why you will stand where you are, with your head above the parapet, eh?" asked Alphonse, with a smile at the middy. "No, no, Dereck! that isn't playing the game with your comrades. If we get to our loopholes so must you, though I admit that now and again it will be necessary to lift a head so as to take a good view of the enemy. Ah! Well done, Jack! That got the fellow."

Jack had meanwhile been standing at one of the loopholes, and had glued his eye to the sights of his rifle. But a few moments before, he had seen a turbaned head suddenly appear above the edge of a distant ridge of sand, and there had followed that warning shout of his, the crack of a weapon, and the splash of sand which had spread over the hollow. Then the turbaned head had disappeared, as if, indeed, the Arab were a jack-in-the-box. But, very slowly and very cautiously, it began to lift above the ridge again, till by slow degrees the black face beneath became visible, while the barrel of a rifle was for a moment thrust upwards and was held sharply silhouetted against the blue of the heavens. Jack's finger closed round the trigger. Steadily he pressed upon it, and then, as Alphonse looked, the complete figure of the Arab suddenly sprang into view and stood for a moment clearly outlined on the summit of a sand-dune. The man held his arms wide-spread, one hand gripping a rifle. He shouted and threw curses at the infidels; then of a sudden, doubling up,

he fell face forward on to the sloping bank of the sand-dune, and rolled over and over till he reached the bottom.

"Number one," said Dereck, winking at his cousins. "Leaves twenty-four of 'em — twenty-three, if you don't count that German traitor. That's whittling 'em down, ain't it? This engagement is to be a sort of war of attrition—the thing our fellows are waging with the French and the Belgians along the West front. Kind of fighting where you hold a line and let the enemy attack as long as possible; encourage 'em to do so as often as you can, and shoot 'em down and thin 'em out till numbers become more reasonably equal. Then, my boys, is the time to go at 'em with the bayonet."

"All very nice to listen to," Claude told him with a laugh; "but there don't happen to be any bayonets this time, Dereck, and besides, charging over these sand-dunes would bother a fellow pretty considerably. Ah! more heads to be seen. The ball begins to open."

"And every one of us must keep well under cover," Dereck commanded. "Don't shoot haphazard, hold your fire till you can make sure of an Arab, then pot him, even if it's that chief, though I hate the thought of shooting him. But it's our lives or theirs, and I reckon they can spare theirs better than we can, for every Briton is wanted in these days. Of course I am taking it that Alphonse is a Briton; at any rate he's one of the Allies, and has lived for years with people of our nation."

The ten minutes that followed were filled with excitement, while the air above the hollow was stirred

by a hundred bullets which swept across the sand-dunes and howled above the hollows and the dimples formed by the wind. Now and again one of the missiles sent by the Arabs would plunge into a saddle, and from the depths of the sand built up against it there would come a metallic thud, which told plainly enough that Alphonse's idea was really excellent. Sometimes, however, a bullet would hit the edge of the parapet, and it was a moment or more before the defenders could rid their eyes of the sand dust which was cast in a cloud all over them.

And during all that time each one of the defenders was busily engaged in keeping off the enemy. The Arabs at first stood outlined on the ridges around, firing directly at them, and exposing themselves with a recklessness and a bravery which commanded the admiration of Dereck and his comrades. But half a dozen successful shots soon put an end to their resolution, and now they lay behind numerous points of cover, sending shots towards the hollow. Not that they had much to aim at but a ridge of sand, which seemed to surround and engulf the five infidels whom they sought to capture. Not a head appeared, save when every few moments Dereck bobbed up for an instant to see how things were progressing. At other times there was a ridge of sand, and only a ridge of sand, at which to aim, for the loopholes constructed by our friends were almost completely invisible. Flashes of flame blazed from the outer surface of this sandy ridge, and almost every time a weapon cracked an Arab tumbled. Indeed, the death of his followers had already roused the aged chief to a condition

bordering on madness. Of fear he had none, and it seemed as if his very recklessness proved his salvation, for though Dereck and his companions fired at the old man now and again—though reluctantly, as we have already suggested—not one of their bullets took effect. He bore a charmed life, and, standing on a ridge some hundred yards from the hollow, shrieked at his followers, while he brandished a weapon at the defenders and shouted angry threats at them.

Even Otto Scholz was roused to a pitch of desperation by the want of success of the Arabs.

"Charge—rush in on them!" he shouted in the ear of the chief, taking the precaution, however, to stand well behind and below the ridge which the Arabs occupied. "Call your men together and make a dash for the place these men are defending; else they will kill every one of you, and then you, who command a tribe, will have the women laughing at you."

The speech, as was intended, goaded the Arab chief to a frenzy. He stamped his foot and, turning on the German, gnashed his teeth at him; then, shrieking at the top of his voice, he called his men from all directions, and soon assembled them in a group behind cover, but within striking distance of the hollow.

"See, my children," he cried, turning to harangue them; "see, are we, men of a warlike race, to be set at naught and treated as children by these infidel dogs who have dared to come amongst us? Are we, who have been sent by the Sultan to take captive or to kill these invaders, to die here like dogs in the sand, or to return to those who sent us and proclaim the fact that we were beaten? By Allah! this shall not be so;

rather would I slay myself here with my own hand than return and declare our impotence. Then let us make an end of the matter at one doing. There is a hollow yonder, within fifty paces of the place these men are holding. There we will gather, and from that point we will launch ourselves upon them. Come, Allah blesses those who slay the infidel. Will ye rest content with what ye have done, and not strive hard to win His blessing?"

There were shouts and cries when he had finished speaking. The eyes of the men who had listened were flashing in a manner which showed that their anger had been roused to the highest pitch by the words of this fiery chief. They brandished their weapons, and in more than one case drew daggers from their belts and gripped them between their teeth while they drew back the locks of their rifles.

"Lead us," they shouted, "lead us, you, against whom the bullets of the infidels can do no harm; then we will follow and slay them."

Very stealthily they crept from behind that sand-dune and down a convenient hollow, and worming their way across a flat space, into which the wind had thrust, as it were, a sunken pathway, they gained the hollow to which the chief had pointed, which brought them within quite easy reach of the defenders.

"Looks nasty," Dereck admitted to himself; then turning to his fellows, he smiled quite pleasantly and called them to face this new danger.

CHAPTER XI

The Royal Navy

At no time during the attack made by the Arabs upon Dereck and his cousins, and upon Alphonse and Jack, had circumstances appeared to be so desperately against them as at the moment when the Arab chief had gathered his followers into that hollow so close to the position held by our heroes. Not more than fifty paces separated the two parties, fifty paces of arid, wind-swept sand, across which bullets hurtled every second; for the defenders never ceased their attempts to whittle down the strength of the enemy, and manning their loopholes, they took advantage of every opportunity presented to them. More than one of the enemy, in fact, were hit in the effort to reach that point from which they hoped to launch themselves upon the infidels.

But the time had come now when bullets were no longer of service, for, cautioned by the old chief, the Arabs kept well below the summit of the ridge surrounding the hollow in which they had taken shelter. Not a head showed, though rifle-barrels were pushed through the sand and shots were sent across at Dereck and his party. But they proved harmless, and in fact were aimed in the most careless manner, or not aimed

at all, and the bullets were sent merely for the purpose of compelling the white men to remain under cover. Meanwhile those fierce Arabs sat on the sand to gather their breath and to prepare for one huge effort.

"Don't look as if we shall keep 'em out, does it?" remarked Dereck, and Claude noted that his cousin was as cool and as calm as was possible. As for the Australian and the New Zealander, they too showed not the slightest trace of excitement; but their wrinkled foreheads and the manner in which they gripped their rifles showed that they, like Dereck and Alphonse and Jack, realized the seriousness of their situation.

"We can try, that's all," said Claude sternly. "They have fifty paces to cross, and if we man the parapet so as to catch a clear view and open magazine fire upon them, we might knock enough of 'em out to make hand-to-hand fighting more even. We can try, as I've said; a chap can't do more than that, can he?"

Shouts were coming down from the distant hollow, the loud shrieks of the Arab chief and the excited calls of his followers. Dark-skinned arms could be seen above the parapet waving rifles and daggers and weapons of every description. Heads bobbed up too, at which the defenders promptly fired; while once an over-eager Arab clambered to the top of the sand-dune and commenced to charge before his comrades were ready. Indeed, he took Dereck and his friends so much by surprise that the shots aimed at this fellow failed to stop him, and bounding across the open he reached the edge of their hollow almost before they knew or could realize what was happening. The agility of the man was wonderful; the deep, loose

sand across which he charged seemed not to impede his progress in the slightest, and with a bound he reached the top of the sand-dune and flung himself into the hollow. But there his movements ended: for it happened that his attack was launched at the spot where Jack Barnsby was standing, and the gallant sailor had a method of his own of dealing with people whom he termed "niggers". Seizing the man, he wrested his weapons from him, one of which was a dagger, and in a twinkling had buried the blade of this weapon in the body of the Arab.

"And so I'll do to 'em all," he gasped, as he dragged the body aside and once more resumed his position.

"Steady; look out there—just coming!" cried Dereck. "Open your cut-offs and be ready to give 'em magazine fire—that is, those who've got magazines; then club your rifles and knock 'em out."

The noise and tumult which had been coming from the distant hollow held by the enemy had grown in proportion till pandemonium reigned in that direction, while not only were heads and arms now visible, but at times men clambered to the top of the parapet to stare at the spot on which they were to launch themselves. And in their midst stood their chief, holding them back with difficulty, haranguing them, stirring up their deepest feelings of hatred, preparing them for the moment, now close at hand, when he would launch them in the direction of the part where the infidels had taken refuge. Nor did it seem likely that he and his men would fail in their efforts, for they greatly outnumbered the defenders; and, moreover, the distance was so short that it seemed hardly likely

that the fire of Dereck and his party could seriously damage them as they crossed the interval.

"And now, my children," he cried, speaking for the last time ere he gave the order, "now, my children, to prove if you are brave men indeed, or mere poltroons; there lie the infidel dogs, the unbelievers, who have dared to invade this country, who have indeed killed many of our people. And here are ye of the Faithful, whom Allah will bless if you prove successful. Gather on either hand of me, and do two of you who have youth and strength aid me in clambering to the top of this sand-dune. Then will I lead you direct against the enemy, knowing that within two minutes of leaving this hollow you will have slain them all and wiped out the injuries they inflicted upon us at the oasis."

Boom! There came a deep, reverberating report from the far distance, a report which caused Dereck to start, and sent the perspiration rolling from his forehead. Not that he had been cool before, for the sun was beating down into that hollow, while the sand reflected the heat of the whole day and made the place like an oven. Yet that sudden report and its deep reverberation made the moisture pour down the sides of his face and from the tips of his fingers. He shouted, he stood high above the edge of the parapet, and, turning towards the sea, bellowed in the ears of his comrades. Then a strong arm gripped him by the shoulder—Jack Barnsby's strong arm—and dragged him down to safety. For following on that loud report a deafening detonation had come from a point some sixty yards in front of them, just ten yards

perhaps behind the hollow which concealed the Arabs. There was a vivid flash of flame, dense clouds of smoke were cast into the air, and sand was tossed in every direction.

Nor was that all. Hardly a second passed before another deep note came from the direction of the ocean and was followed by a second detonation, which seemed to take place in the very centre of the enemy. A moment later figures were observed flying through the sand dust, and when the clouds had died down not one of the enemy was to be seen in the neighbourhood of that hollow. The gathering had been broken up entirely, and now those who remained of the chief and his followers were scuttling, singly or in twos, across the sand-dunes, running for their lives, and making frantic efforts to pass behind those ridges of sand to the shelter of the desert.

And other eyes observed them besides those of the forlorn little party of five who had so gallantly faced them. Aboard a ship, which had stolen in silently from the offing and now stood off the sandy, glittering beach, perhaps a quarter of a mile away, were officers who through their glasses followed every movement. The gun which had already done such execution flashed again and again while Dereck and his friends hid in their hollow. Shells plumped into the sand-dunes amongst the running enemy, and did not cease to fall till the last of them to leave had disappeared into the desert. By then the eager Dereck had attached a slip of the Arab clothing he was wearing to his rifle-barrel, and, standing upon the edge of the hollow, was waving this improvised flag vio-

lently. He was simply bubbling over with delight and enjoyment, while Claude and Hal and Alphonse and Jack chaffed him and shouted, shaking hands with one another, laughing, almost crying, so great was the relief to their feelings.

"And the Navy's done it—the Navy all alone!" cried Dereck, when a few minutes had passed and an officer aboard the distant boat had waved a response to them. "Good old Navy, ain't I proud to belong to it! Now, boys, get the things together. By Jove! I am sorry about these camels—won't be able to take 'em back to Egypt, shall we?"

"Hardly likely," admitted Claude brightly, laughing at his cousin; "but we shall take ourselves back, or rather your Navy Johnnies will do that, and we may consider ourselves jolly lucky. Personally, I'd said good-bye to New Zealand, home, and beauty some minutes ago, for I never expected that we'd get out of this pickle, and here we are, and as you say, there's the Navy. Well, the British Navy, and the Australian Navy for the matter of that, have helped many Britons before now. But I doubt whether a British boat has ever rescued a party by so narrow a margin. Another minute, Dereck——"

"Another minute," repeated his cousin solemnly, "and we should have been like this fellow."

He pointed to the dead Arab lying at the bottom of the hollow—pointed and shuddered. For Dereck was still only a young fellow, not yet hardened to warfare, though before this terrific fighting was finished he was likely to be a very experienced warrior. The gallant Jack Barnsby, seeing him wince, scraped a

hole in the sand and rapidly buried the unhappy Arab, thus hiding an unpleasant sight from his youthful officer.

By then the ship lying off the sandy shore had steamed in closer, and the five watched as a boat was launched and splashed into the water. "Torpedo destroyer," said Dereck in his own lordly manner, as if the near approach of the Navy and the prospect of once more being on board ship had brought back all his old manners. "She'll be on scout duty, don't you know, and jolly lucky for us, I can tell you. Well, when we're on board there are two things—no, three things—that we shall have to shout for."

"One's food," shouted Claude, his eyes sparkling. "Dates and all that sort of stuff may be good enough for Arabs, but for full-grown New Zealanders meat's required, to keep 'em in bone and muscle."

"And decent clothes, eh?" declared Hal, laughing and turning round to show his comrades the queer costume in which he was garbed. "A khaki uniform is good enough for me these days, when every man who is a man ought to be fighting. So new uniforms will be wanted, and food—and I don't care if the food comes first, I can tell you."

"And then," asked Alphonse politely, in that queer, quiet little way which was so characteristic of him, "then, *mon ami*," he said, addressing Dereck, "this third thing which you will require, may one ask its nature?"

"Ask, and be told immediately," the middy answered promptly. "It's a bath, my dear Alphonse. I have been dressed in these awful togs nearly a week

past, and, pah! don't they niff, and ain't I sick of 'em! So I put it like this: first a bath, because it's not good to bathe immediately after feeding, then a thundering good meal, with meat to it, as Claude has said. I don't care if I am dressed in a blanket for that part of the programme; but later I shall want clothes, decent clothes, the sort of thing a naval officer wears, don't you know, you fellows."

"Ahoy, there!" A hail reached them from the beach, and gathering their weapons together and carrying their saddles, which they had now dug out of the sand and intended to keep as trophies, the five made as rapid progress as they could down towards the spot where the boat had been beached.

A midshipman had come ashore with the boat's crew, and for a minute at least he regarded the five figures advancing toward him with some degree of hauteur; there was amusement, too, on his rather pleasant features, and some little disgust, for certainly Dereck and his friends presented a none too pretty picture. Those days in the desert, their hot marches in the direction of safety, and the manner in which they had to entrench themselves in that sandy hollow had not helped to improve their condition. More than that, the scarcity of water, its almost total absence excepting what they carried, which was absolutely essential for drinking purposes only, had made ablution quite out of the question. They were stained with dust, sunburned, unkempt, and dirty. It was no wonder, then, that the gallant midshipman regarded them with some amount of horror.

"My word," he grinned, turning to a petty officer

who stood beside him, and not imagining for a moment that one of the five pitiable figures could speak English; "my word, but ain't this something! What dirty-looking scarecrows! Looks as if they hadn't washed for a century; but—they are armed, though they look friendly enough. How's a chap to start talking to them when he don't know their lingo?"

But the voluble Dereck soon relieved him of any doubt he may have had, for, as one might have expected, the somewhat patronizing words of his fellow-middy had roused him to a pitch of indignation.

"You just get done with that rot, Fergusson," he told him curtly. "You ain't got any need to talk any other lingo than the one you're used to; and look here, when you start shying stones at fellows, just remember that if you had been out in the desert for more than a week, and dressed in these dirty old things taken from Arabs, you wouldn't be over-healthy or over-pleasant. Now, my man," he went on, for in a flash he realized that he was the senior of the party, and that Fergusson was decidedly his junior, "now, my man, just get these saddles aboard, and wait a moment while we collect a few trophies from these dead Arabs. Oh, no, Fergusson, you ain't the only chaps who have killed Arabs; we'd killed over half a dozen before you turned up on the premises. We'll collect their arms and any knick-knacks they happen to have about them, and then we'll get aboard. Got a signaller with you—what?"

"Yes, sir," gasped the unfortunate Fergusson, not yet recovered from the surprise into which the presence of Dereck and his party had thrown him, and

not a little chagrined by the discovery that he had been perhaps a little foolish.

"Then let him signal 'em aboard to get baths and grub ready for us," Dereck commanded, in his most official manner. "We are dirty—that you have already told us—and we are simply ravenous. Now, boys, let's get these trophies and be done with this desert; I don't care if I never see it again, and never set eyes on an Arab."

Less than half an hour later the boat returned to the destroyer, and our heroes were welcomed aboard; were welcomed with open arms and shouts of merriment at first, and then with undisguised pleasure. In the space of a few minutes all five were splashing in the baths provided for them; not that a destroyer carries a huge number of these very convenient and necessary articles, but your sailor is a wonderful fellow for getting over difficulties, and a portion of a canvas awning formed into a pocket and filled with water did excellent service for Jack Barnsby; while Dereck and his cousins and Alphonse were accommodated in the officers' quarters. Later there was silence for a while, a significant silence, during which the five eagerly devoured the good things put before them; and by then we may explain that the somewhat limited wardrobes of the officers and men aboard had been rummaged, and had provided suitable clothing for all of them.

"And now, perhaps, Mr. Smallweed," said the Commander, turning with a smile to Dereck when the latter had finished eating; "now, Mr. Smallweed, that you have reported yourself aboard officially, you



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THERE WAS A VIVID FLASH OF FLAME, AND DENSE CLOUDS OF SMOKE WERE CAST INTO THE AIR

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will perhaps be good enough to give the details of your adventures. Let me see, you obtained leave of absence some ten days ago in order to see an Australian uncle."

He smiled serenely and glanced swiftly at his brother officers, while Dereck reddened perceptibly. You could see the rush of colour to his cheeks even under the deep sunburn.

"Yes, sir," he said, "leave for a special purpose, sir; don't see uncles every day of the year, specially from Australia."

"Quite so," the Commander answered, still with that dry little smile, which captivated Claude and Hal and Alphonse; "and did this uncle actually live in some port to which you would gain access by taking passage on a native craft then lying at Port Said? Or perhaps," he went on, laughing outright now—for Dereck's face was quite a study—"there is some other explanation of that manœuvre. Still, it is known that you and three companions went off in a native boat, and a rumour has reached us that one, an able seaman—Jack Barnsby, in fact, the very man who has come aboard with you—in some strange way managed to join the party. It was feared that you had been swamped in that sudden storm which arose, and since then you have been notified as 'missing'. But it takes a great deal to kill off a snottie—eh?" he laughed, "and some ten days have passed since you set out for that trip. A veil has been drawn over your proceedings, and as far as I could see through my glasses, it seemed that but for the appearance of this ship and that gun of ours a permanent veil might

have been drawn over the whole of your difficulties. Now, sir, let's hear what happened. You were on special leave to see an uncle, you went aboard a native boat, you disappeared; what happened?"

"Yessir—er—er—certainly, sir—what happened?" said Dereck, his self-assurance for once somewhat undermined by the winks and the obvious quizzing of this smiling Commander; also, Mr. Midshipman Fergusson was grinning pointedly at him from behind the shoulder of one of the officers, and was winking and grimacing widely at his discomfited messmate. However, Mr. Midshipman Smallweed was not the one to be long subdued or to allow his spirits to be suppressed for an undue period. He gasped and took in a deep breath; then, with an obvious effort to regain his self-composure, and turning from Claude to Hal, and then to Alphonse, he repeated the Commander's question.

"That's just it, sir," he said, taking the seat which was offered to him, and accepting with delightful calmness a cigarette which the Commander held out. "Smoking allowed, sir? What happened, but—oh! er—er—well, such a heap of things happened that I hardly know where to start, or where the yarn really ought to commence."

"May I remind you, my dear fellow," said the Commander suavely, "that I have already commenced this narrative for you. Let me repeat," he smiled. "There was a native boat, an uncle, and special leave. You and your party set sail on the waters and disappeared. Now lift the curtain and enlighten us."

Thus encouraged—in fact, compelled by the obvious good-humour, indeed by the ill-concealed merriment and inquisitiveness of the Commander and his brother officers—Dereck launched out upon a full explanation of his long-continued absence, and told of the storm, and how Alphonse had come forward to assist them.

At this point all eyes were turned upon Alphonse, lounging back in a corner of the mess-room and calmly sucking at a huge cigar presented to him only a few moments earlier. To look at Alphonse's face now, with the knowledge of what had so recently happened, it was hard to believe that he was, indeed, a fine fellow, a firm disciplinarian if need be, a young man capable of instant decision, and one, moreover, not afraid to enter into the sternest fighting. Alphonse, let us say again, did not shine in company and in times of peace. It was in strenuous moments that the Frenchman came to the fore so amazingly. Yet there was something in him which the experienced eye of the Commander detected almost instantly, and more than once as the yarn proceeded his eyes went across to study the Frenchman.

"Yes, yes," he was telling himself; "looks soft, but those deep-set eyes mean something. That young fellow has seen a lot. He's got himself well under; he's learnt to control himself and his temper. It would be a good thing for many of us if we could do likewise. I like the looks of our ally, and certainly, when he came aboard dressed as an Arab, he was a most dignified and impressive, if dirty individual."

It may well be imagined that the tale which Dereck had to tell them filled his hearers with enthusiasm,

and it drew from them the unstinted praises of his seniors as well as of the now enviously enthusiastic Fergusson. His eyes were sparkling as he listened to the lordly Dereck.

"My uncle!" he was heard to exclaim, *sotto voce*; though the Commander overheard him, and turning, abruptly checked the middy. "That fellow Dereck is a lucky young beggar. Just fancy seeing such a heap of fighting, and all on his own too! He'll get a 'mention', I wouldn't wonder."

"You fellows have really done capitally," said the Commander thoughtfully, as he smoked a fourth cigarette and looked first at the middy and then at the Australian and the New Zealander—for he had already inspected very thoroughly every inch of Alphonse's somewhat incongruous person. "Done finely, I must say, and kept your own end up wonderfully against great odds. Of course I shall have to report your arrival on board, and I believe I shall do rightly by putting Mr. Smallweed under arrest until he can explain to the authorities the reason for his absence. Now, there's one thing I didn't quite understand. Mr. Smallweed tells us that when escaping from the oasis you ran into a party sent to reinforce this old Arab chief and his men, whom you had been treating so badly. I understand that Mr. Alphonse here—of whose other name I am unfortunately ignorant—went out to interview a member of this reinforcing party. After that, our friend Mr. Smallweed became curiously silent—secretive, let me term it. Well, Mr. Smallweed, what is there behind this extraordinary silence?"

"Information, sir," the middy blurted out. "Intel-

ligence which it don't do to repeat—er—er—I beg pardon, sir, but I think it's information that I ought to tell you alone, and leave it to your discretion to repeat to all the officers here if you think desirable."

"Very nicely put, indeed," the Commander told him, patting him encouragingly on the back, "and no offence meant to anyone, I am sure. Very discreet on your part, Mr. Smallweed, and I needn't say that it does credit to you and all your comrades. Excuse us, gentlemen, for a little while; Mr. Smallweed will come to my cabin."

Five minutes later, when the two officers appeared again in the messroom, it was noticed that the Commander's face was rather sterner, though his eyes twinkled brightly.

"Gentlemen," he said, rather abruptly, "we'll get moving at once; this officer has communicated some information of great importance."

There followed the throb of engines and the blowing of much steam and smoke from the funnels. The destroyer turned away from that glittering stretch of sandy beach, from which Dereck and his friends had so recently parted, and steamed off towards the offing. Circling round so abruptly that she rolled her scuppers almost into the water, she set a course for Port Said, and went rushing through the water at a speed which threw a mass of spray from her bows. Indeed, it would appear that the Commander was in a violent hurry, for he tramped the deck impatiently as he entered into a confidential discussion with one of his officers.

"The Admiral must learn all about this at once,"

he told him, "and of course the military authorities must be informed immediately we arrive at Port Said. The Turks may attack at any time, and with the information young Dereck has brought, our fellows should be able to counter them immediately. I shall leave you in command of the boat, and shall take young Dereck up with me. We will drop aboard the cruiser so as to let him get some decent togs on, and then go straight away to the Admiral. Just ring up the engine-room again and see if they can't give us a little more steam; I am very anxious to make our report at the earliest possible moment."

That night the lordly Dereck was indeed in his element. Dressed in his smartest kit, well brushed and well groomed, and accompanied by the genial Commander who had rescued the party, he was ushered into the Admiral's cabin for an eventful interview.

"I congratulate you, Mr. Smallweed. I—you certainly have done very well with your little party," the Admiral told the snottie. "I shall—yes—certainly—the matter shall be mentioned, and your name brought before the Naval Board. The information you have given is decidedly valuable. Send in a report through your Commander, and you will oblige by giving full details of the names and rank of your comrades."

That the information was indeed accurate and of importance those British troops who had been manning the Suez Canal for some time past were to learn very shortly; for mad though the expedition seemed, doomed to failure as it certainly was even before it started, the Turks bore down upon Egypt and commenced their march across the desert.

CHAPTER XII

The Suez Canal

THE return of Mr. Midshipman Smallweed and his four companions to Port Said and the zone of the Suez Canal created, as one might easily imagine, quite a sensation. It became, indeed, a very genuine and extremely interesting nine days' wonder, and proved quite a species of tonic to the Colonial contingents, the Indian Division, and the gallant Territorial Division then manning the trenches and garrisoning Egypt.

In the strangest manner possible, though one might without great difficulty have traced the origin of the rumour to a certain garrulous A.B., to wit one Jack Barnsby, it leaked out that the weary weeks of waiting beside that long and uninteresting Canal were to receive at last the termination for which each one of the men had been longing.

"Folks says as them Turks is comin' to try their luck at last," one enthusiastic Tommy Atkins told another. "Bill—that is, Private Bill Cummins of my company; you know the chap!—the fellow with sandy hair and a face that's like a dustman's. The heat in these here outlandish parts has roasted Bill a dirty-brown colour, and what with his general

untidiness and his neglect of his personal appearance, why! that there Bill's a perfect knock-out——"

"Hold hard!" his comrade shouted. "I ain't axing to know what Bill's like, nor what's the size of his nose, nor his mouth, nor nuffin'. Bill Cummins can be as dirty as any sweep for what I cares; the thing is, what's 'e been sayin'?"

"Well, ain't I just about to tell yer?" growled the one who had first spoken, plugging the barrel of a short and well-seasoned pipe with a dexterous finger. "Hold hard, mate! My bacca's run out, which is unfortunate, but your'n ain't. Thanks! Bird's-eye, eh! Jingo, if that ain't nobby! But we was talkin' about Bill."

"We was," admitted the other, watching somewhat ruefully, if not anxiously, as his comrade helped himself liberally from the packet of tobacco of which he had momentarily relieved the speaker. "You was goin' to say what Bill said, and then you got right off the line and got sayin' what he looked like. Now, there's many a ugly beggar in our platoon, and I reckon your Bill ain't no handsomer nor uglier than them others. What's he said?"

"Ain't I comin' to it?" grumbled the one who had first spoken, evidently quite indignant at what he considered to be an interruption on the part of this man of the Lancashire Division. "You Manchester chaps is always in such a blessed hurry, and you take a chap up so fast that he ain't got time to think, let alone breathin'. This 'ere Bill——"

"Yus, this 'ere Bill——"

"Look 'ere, me lad," shouted the first, flushing

quite red with righteous indignation, "are you a-goin' to tell us what this 'ere Bill said, or am I a-goin' to do it? Besides, 'oo is Bill? What's he got special to do with the yarn I was about to give yer when you come in with yer interruption? 'E ain't the only one who knows it; any bright spark along the Canal 'as got to hear of it. Wonder is to me that you Lancashire boys ain't quicker."

That brought a hoarse growl from the man from Manchester, and for a while he glared at his comrade.

"'Ere!" he shouted. "Who's callin' names, and —ain't you done with my 'bacca? Thanks!" and he eyed the remaining contents of the packet with an air which showed that he was anything but satisfied.

However, fortunately perhaps for the peace and quietness of that particular portion of the trenches adjacent to the Canal, the matter in dispute between the two was brought to an abrupt termination by the sudden appearance of a British aeroplane, which soared high above them, and for a time occupied all their attention. By then the pipe of the soldier who had been about to repeat the yarn which one, Bill, of his own particular platoon had passed to him was drawing splendidly, and like his companions he had absolutely forgotten the fact that there had been even so much as an interruption.

"Yus," he resumed, "it's all over the place. There's a orfficer of the Royal Navy what's a 'onourable. He's what's known as a 'snottie', otherwise as a midshipmite, and he's a 'ot 'un, and don't you ferget it. Well, this 'ere 'onourable one got trekkin' off into the desert and captures a heap of them Turks

and Arabs. They do say that he himself shot a dozen of 'em besides what he did with the queer little sword them 'snotties' carries with 'em."

"Hoh, yus!" his companion nodded. "I knows them midshipmites, and they're 'ot 'uns. And then?"

"That's just what I was a-goin' to tell yer," the other grumbled. "He, this 'ere 'snottie'—the 'onourable one I've been and mentioned—he brings in a whole bunch of Turks and Arabs, besides guns and saddles and daggers and camels, and one of them prisoners blabs. There's to be an attack on the Canal almost immediately. Them Turks have got pontoons and guns and what-not; and that there aereoplane what's just gone overhead has gone out to scout for them. There'll be somethin' doin'."

There was indeed a considerable amount doing in the Canal zone before much time had elapsed after the return of Dereck and his party to their people, and from end to end of the long line of trenches and defensive posts held by the British there was a display of keenness and eager expectation which had been absent for a little while.

"We've got something to live for now, you fellows," Dereck told Claude and Hal, happening to stumble up against them one day as he steered his steam pinnace along the Canal. Not that he could well stumble against his cousins when in the boat. But Dereck was always one of those restless, eager fellows who fret if confined to a narrow space for very long. And so, often and often when on these expeditions he found some excuse to step ashore. Indeed, the jovial midshipman was well known all

along the British positions, and as he steamed his way along the Canal many a cheery call reached him, while many a caustic and witty reply was shouted across the water by the "snottie".

"Something to expect. More fighting, eh? That is, more for us," he told Claude and Hal. "Of course, the beggars along here haven't heard a gun fired yet and haven't smelled powder. Wonder how the Australian and New Zealand contingents'll do?"

The huge New Zealander glared at him. "As if—" he began threateningly—then he laughed. "Always trying to pull my leg," he chuckled. "But—but seriously——"

"Certainly! Seriously. Of course," grinned Dereck. "Look out, Hal! Claude's going to be serious."

"Confound the fellow!" grumbled his cousin, though he was laughing still. "But—but look at our fellows, at the New Zealanders and the Australians. Did ever a finer lot leave the Antipodes? Could you find a grander set of men 'down under' if you tried to? And—and do they look as if they would funk?"

"Look as if they would funk! No. Most certainly no," cried Dereck, as warm and as enthusiastic as his cousin could desire him to be. But then, that was one of the attractive things about the Honourable Dereck Smallweed. He could and would continually tease his friends. Even with strangers he was never stand-offish, and rapidly developed an acquaintance till friendship, jokes, and little pleasantries followed. He could put up with raillery himself too, and could see the point in a joke made

directly against himself. But with it all, there was an enthusiastic support of his friends, a magnificent belief in the bravery and the invincibility of the British and their allies, and a particular belief in the Colonial contingents then garrisoning the Canal, simply and purely because his cousins belonged to them. Indeed, after the Navy, the Colonials had the warm approval of Mr. Smallweed; and, let us add, young and inexperienced though he was, the midshipman was no mean judge of those he saw about him.

"Funk! Rather not," he told Claude eagerly. "They're the finest body of men I ever saw—er—that is, of course, naturally, don't you know—the finest lot after the Navy. As for fighting, they're just itching to see some fun, and they'll give those Turks a warm time of it."

It was a fascinating trip which Dereck made down the long length of shimmering, smooth water that stretched between its two banks of yellow sand. For though a close inspection even of the western bank disclosed no trenches, and no "positions", yet faces peered out at him from the most unexpected places. Perhaps a British Tommy, a Lancashire Territorial, popped his head up from behind a ridge of sand, grinned at the boat's crew at first, and shouted a welcome; and then, suddenly seeing an officer amongst them, saluted with a flourish. Or it might be a dusky head which was of a sudden erected from the depths of a pit dug in the sand, a pit which Dereck had never even suspected to be near him. Yet it was there, and for a moment or so one of its Indian garrison would look down into the pinnace

with those deep, thoughtful eyes common to people of the east. Then a rifle would be "sloped" with a jerk, and Dereck would answer the salute with a lordliness and a punctiliousness which would have done credit to nothing less exalted than an admiral. But it was the Australians who really took Dereck's breath away. They looked down upon him with a friendly inquisitiveness, with perhaps an open smile of amusement which somewhat baffled the middy.

"Like their cheek," he would mutter, for Dereck was accustomed to the discipline and the quick salutes of the Navy. Then, as the men he saw peering down at him from a machine-gun position quickly stood to attention and saluted, Dereck would fling them a smile in return, would perhaps hail them, and would certainly make a mental note of their appearance.

"Jolly, fine-looking beggars, what? Never saw a harder-looking crew. They'll do something before this war's finished. No Turk'll beat 'em, and as to the Germans, why——"

But there the midshipman could not prophesy. Such a thing was hopeless. And yet it was not so hard to state, with a definiteness about which there could be no doubt, and without fear of refutation, that whatever else the Colonials might accomplish, they would certainly prove magnificent fighters. Indeed, could Dereck have looked into the future he would have learned that the Australians and the New Zealanders were to win the unstinted praise and admiration of Britons from end to end of the Empire—were to prove, indeed, that no stancher fighting ma-

terial was to be obtained from any other portion of the globe. No matter whether the enemy were Turk or German, these Colonials—like the gallant Canadians who fought so magnificently before Ypres, in Flanders—were destined during the course of this war to display a dash, a noble courage, and such a total disregard of self that they would be acclaimed far and wide, envied for their brilliance, for their strength and youth and grit, and admired for the wonderful example they set.

Yes, there was keenness, animation, an unwonted flow of high spirits amongst the troops garrisoning the Suez Canal zone. The faces of the Colonials, of the Lancashire Territorials, of the stolid Indians even, showed expectation, impatience, happiness. Not one there looked anxious. Only, as they cast their eyes across the strip of water lying sluggishly between them and the desert across which the enemy were expected to come, there was impatience, even annoyance, displayed by some of the faces—annoyance at the long-delayed coming of the Turk and his German master. And then one day there came tidings.

"Aeroplane johnny has seen some of the beggars. There are two or three lots of 'em," Dereck gasped, when he at length came upon his cousins. "They've sent out a camel patrol, and Alphonse is with 'em."

"Alphonse! But——"

"Medically unfit. Yes, we all know about that," the garrulous midshipman shouted. "But——"

"Exactly," Hal chimed in; "but we know that he's as fit and as strong as they make them. Our little trip did it."

"Yes, showed 'em—that is, the authorities—that Alphonse was as good a man as any," said Claude warmly. "Of course, he's a valuable addition, for as interpreter to the garrison here he's able to interrogate any sort of fellow who may be captured."

The tall, dilapidated Frenchman had indeed found no difficulty in obtaining a position with the British forces after that long adventure with Dereck and his fellows. Strangely enough, though he had been neglected before, his real worth had been swiftly recognized. And now, as Claude had stated, he had become an interpreter. Late that evening, in fact, he returned from his ride into the desert and whispered some important news in their ears.

"Coming right enough, those Turks," he said. "There are two or three lots of 'em, and through the glasses I made out those pontoons of which the Turkish under-officer told me. So it was true, eh, Dereck? Shouldn't wonder if we all got a lot of credit for that business."

In the very early hours of the following morning, the truth of the report which Dereck had communicated to the Admiral after the return of his party from the desert was even more substantially demonstrated. For strong forces of Turks were seen crossing toward the canal, dragging guns and pontoons behind them. Nor were they all collected together, for under the guidance of their German officers they were about to attack the Canal at more points than one. Their silent approach in the darkness had led them to believe and hope that they would catch the British unprepared; and, indeed,

there was nothing to disabuse their minds as they came within sight of the water. Not a British soldier was visible. Not a sound reached their ears, and no one challenged. Silently and swiftly they slid their pontoons from the broad-wheeled carriages which had supported them, and dragged them to the bank of the Canal. Then the trained crews in charge of them slid them down the bank and let them enter the water ever so gently and noiselessly. Troops appeared as if by magic then, and treading their way through the sand without so much as a sound, and without a whisper, rapidly embarked upon the pontoons. Who knows? Amidst those Turkish troops there must have been many an exulting German, many an officer from the Fatherland whose pulses tingled with expectation. For what did this silence signify?

"The downfall of the British, yes," one of them ventured to whisper in the ear of a fellow-German. "We have caught these proud, stiff-necked Englanders napping, and soon we shall see. Soon the Canal will be ours. Then Egypt, and later—bah!"

Yes, later, there was a prize to be obtained—a prize for which this particular German had been scheming. Not that he forgot the prize for which the Kaiser and his War-lords had been working—the capture of the Suez Canal to wit, and with it all Egypt: the capture, in fact, of a zone of vital importance to the British, of a highway which gave them ready access to their Australasian Colonies and to India, and which allowed them to draw from over the water some of their very finest fighting troops. The utter severance of the motherland from her overseas pos-

sessions, from those gallant sons rushing to her aid, from thousands upon thousands of Indians eager to support their Emperor, would result from a capture of this vital waterway; and such a result would well repay all the trickery and conspiracy entailed in inducing the Turks to throw in their lot with Germany and her ally, would recompense the Kaiser and his people for the money they had squandered in Turkey, for the tons of ammunition they had sent to the country, and for the services of those officers who had trained the Sultan's army.

No wonder, then, that those German officers lying full length on the eastern bank of the Canal peered eagerly through the gloom at the pontoons then being pushed far into the water. As for those on board, they held their breath and gripped the steel sides of the pontoons, hardly daring to believe in their good luck, their pulses beating with expectation and with excitement.

"Away from the bank and still not a challenge," the one who had whispered before again whispered in the ear of a fellow. "In a minute we shall be across, and then——"

And then, what? This man, this squat, ugly, misshapen individual whose khaki helmet seemed almost to cover him entirely, gnawed at a stubbly moustache and muttered, while his protruding eyes peered into the gloom which still hung across the water. "And then—and then there is that Alphonse and his father, and—and those others whom I met in the desert."

For a moment or so the very recollection of what had happened brought sudden beads of perspiration

to the ugly, narrow brows of this ruffian, this Otto Scholz, this treacherous cousin of Alphonse Albone's. Then the eyes gleamed and the man snapped his fingers, thereby drawing an exclamation of annoyance from the German seated beside him.

"Silence!" he whispered savagely. "That snap will be heard far at a time like this. It may have awakened the sleeping enemy."

But Otto had subsided into the end of the pontoon already, his ears deaf to the words of his comrade. For this rascally German was thinking of his own particular affairs, of his coming triumph, of Alphonse and what he would do to his cousin.

"Bah! What matters if they are all here?" he was saying to himself. "If they are here they will be slain. The Turks will leave none of them to tell the tale of this day's doings. And as for Alphonse and his people, well, I know their business houses. That is one of the advantages of belonging to the family. I will borrow a dozen or more of the soldiers —soldiers whom I shall select, brave men who will carry out my bidding. Then there will be a swift end of Alphonse and the whole breed of Albone, while I shall seize the papers and the property. Yes, the thing looks well. We are already half across the water."

"Hist! I heard a sound."

The officer beside him lifted a warning finger and craned his head toward the opposite bank.

"Pooh! Not so much as a chirrup. We are almost across," Otto told him with a grin of triumph. "In a moment or so——"

In a moment or so the peace of the Canal was shattered by such a hail of bullets, by such a rattle and roar of musketry, that the treacherous Otto buried himself in the bottom of the pontoon and dragged an already dead Turk across his own squat, misshapen body. A machine-gun away to the right blazed at the advancing Turks, perforating those steel pontoons in a hundred places, and carrying death and wounds to the occupants. Then its fire ceased as swiftly as it had begun, but only to burst forth again within half a minute, its bullets hurled now against the enemy crouching on the opposite bank of the Canal. Men shouted. A hoarse cheer was flung from one of the British trenches, and was drowned before it was finished by the distant roar of an 18-pounder gun. Boom! it went, and then lapsed into silence for a few seconds. Again the report came, smothering the cries of the Turks still alive in those pontoons with which the Kaiser's officers had hoped to carry the Sultan's troops to victory in Egypt. A machine-gun spluttered from a point higher up the Canal, and was followed by a long-continued roll of musketry. And then again the gun came into the concert, and, as if it had now got its wind and were sure of its target, began rapid practice.

To Claude and Hal, to Dereck too, farther down the Canal, where he was aboard his pinnace, the affair was over almost before it had begun, and the attempted crossing of the Canal had been shattered. Indeed, long before it was clear daylight the Turks who had advanced on that particular part of the Canal had been thrown back, or had been killed on the bank or sent

beneath the water. A solitary pontoon remained half in and half out of the Canal, a dead Turk dangling over its thwarts, its steel sides presenting a hundred and more perforations where British bullets had torn their way through them. For the rest, attempts elsewhere met with the same want of success, though it took longer to dislodge the enemy. Still, long before night came the enemy were in full retreat, and thus ended the loud boastings of the Turks and their German officers that they would carve a way to Cairo.

Dereck Smallweed was a very proud officer that night after an accidental meeting with the Admiral.

"Hah! That's you, eh?" that officer exclaimed, happening to come face to face with our hero as he was landing. "Mr. Smallweed, I think?"

"Er—yes, sir, certainly," replied the incorrigible Dereck, smiling and saluting.

"The officer who broke his leave, eh?—who got ashore away there in the desert and managed to get news of the Turkish doings!"

This particular Admiral was a tall, austere officer, one who was apt to scare the life out of "snotties" till they knew him. But Dereck had had the fortune to meet him before; and besides, the Honourable Dereck Smallweed was not the one to be easily abashed even by a very senior officer.

"Comes of having so much to do with the pater," he had told his fellow-middies. "He's an Admiral, don't you know, and a fellow soon gets used to 'em."

However, whatever else he was, Dereck was a discreet and respectful young officer. "Yes, sir," he answered swiftly; and then, *sotto voce*, "Broke leave,

eh? I like his cheek. Managed to get news of the Turks. Yes, guilty."

"Ah! Then allow me to say, Mr. Smallweed, that I'm proud of you and your comrades. You've done an inestimable service to the General Officer Commanding the British forces. You've—— Good day!"

"Lor'! Thought he was going to promote me right off, or ask me to dinner," grinned Dereck, when recounting the meeting to his cousins. "Then shut up like an oyster. Just like him. He's known for that. Starts to thank a chap, then he closes down. Drops his anchor, as you might say, and brings up all of a sudden. Don't I wish he would ask a fellow to dinner! I'm tired of the grub they give us 'snotties'."

Imagine his delight, then, when he received on the following morning a crisp little note in the Admiral's handwriting.

"Dear Mr. Smallweed," it ran, "I shall be delighted if you will dine with me to-morrow night, and if you will bring with you those gentlemen who accompanied you during your journey in the desert."

"'Yours sincerely.' See that?" shouted Dereck, showing the missive to his cousins and to Alphonse. "Shouldn't wonder if we all got promoted. If we'd been in the German navy—beg pardon—army too, of course, eh, Claude? Well, if we'd been in the Kaiser's service we'd have had iron crosses as big as the one on top of St. Paul's hanging round our necks by this. But—dinner with the Admiral. Hooray! Hope the old boy'll give us something worth eating."

Those days which followed the Turkish attempt

upon the Canal began to drag a little when the excitement was all over, and there came a time when the gallant garrison of Egypt fretted. Then some news came to hand which heartened them wonderfully.

"We're going for the Turks at Gallipoli," an officer told Dereck and his cousins. "The fear of having the Canal cut by the enemy no longer worries us. But Britain must carve a way through the long, narrow streak of water which runs from the Mediterranean up to Constantinople and thence to the Black Sea, and so get in touch with Russia. Our ally there has thousands and thousands of men who can fight the Germans and the Austrians, not to mention the Turks in the Caucasus, so long as they can be equipped and can have an ample supply of guns and ammunition. That's where the rub comes. Russia doesn't happen to be a manufacturing country. She grows an enormous quantity of grain, and that we can do with easily. In exchange we can send her in ammunition, rifles, guns, and equipment so soon as we can get through the Dardanelles. So that's the next business."

It was one which France and Great Britain set about promptly, and with that business-like acumen for which they were becoming notorious now that the great war had been for some months in progress. Indeed, ever since the wily Turk had joined forces with the Germans, ever since the huge battle-cruiser the *Goeben*, and the cruiser the *Breslau*, had managed to evade our warships and pass through the Dardanelles into the Black Sea, it had become apparent that the barrier thus created between ourselves and our

Allies must be broken down. The addition of those two powerful German ships to the weak Turkish fleet made the position of the Russian Black Sea fleet precarious, for the *Goeben* was able to bring a broadside of huge guns into any fighting there might be. And then the outbreak of war, commenced by hostile acts committed by those vessels, then manned in part by Turks, brought Turkey into the conflict, and found Britain and her Allies cut off hopelessly from Russia by the Sultan's forces manning those lines of formidable forts which guard the shores of the Dardanelles. Look at the map, and reflect that the narrowest part of that narrow stream which leads to the Black Sea is less than a mile wide. Then remember that a mile is nothing when compared with the distances over which modern guns are capable of discharging projectiles. The formidable task of breaking a way through this barrier can be well imagined, and it is not to be wondered at that an attempt made by the combined French and British fleets failed to pierce this obstacle. Operations were then decided on wherein both fleet and troops should each take a share, and in preparation for this new venture transports soon began to hover about Port Said and Alexandria. There was bustle in the Canal zone. There was fighting in the air. Dereck could have shouted with joy as his ship steamed off towards the coast of Gallipoli. As for Claude and Hal and Alphonse, they followed in a transport with some of the troops; while the gallant Jack Barnsby even then was smoking a pipe aboard the ship which carried Dereck, and was still keeping a paternal eye on his protégé.

CHAPTER XIII

A Desperate Undertaking

"STEADY with it there, lads. Push off that barge, my man. Slippy with it, or she'll be thumping into us, and then there won't be any little picnic for us this morning."

Mr. Midshipman Smallweed was decidedly in his element as he stood in the bows of the cruiser's steam pinnace and, megaphone in hand, gave his lordly orders. Dressed in khaki drill, his cap pushed back at that well-known and fascinating rakish angle, a revolver in his belt and a pair of glasses swung across his shoulders, he looked a very business-like individual, a typical sailor, a most attractive snottie.

"Bustle with it there, my men," he called to the soldiers at that moment swarming down the gangway of the cruiser. "Bustle with it, or we'll be late, and those other boys will be before us. Give her steam there; just enough to keep the pinnace out of reach of the barges."

"Aye, aye, sir. Give 'er steam," growled Jack Barnsby, one of the pinnace party, and ever, when he could manage it, at the elbow of his protégé.

"'Cos I knew 'is dad," he would whisper hoarsely to his messmates. "'Im—that's Mr. Smallweed—'is

father, the Admiral, you know, and me sailed along in company many a time; that we did. And this 'ere snottie's a similar sort o' officer. Besides, even if 'is pa didn't so much as actually say to me, 'Now, Jack Barnsby, there's this 'ere Mr. Dereck as is a-goin' to sea, and you'll be good enough to look after him,' he as good as said it. Then I was with him and his mates in that little expedition you've heard of, when we whopped them Arabs. Yes, sir. Give 'er steam. What's that, Singleton?"

A head had been thrust over the rail of the cruiser far above them, and the anxious face of Dereck's marine servant looked down upon them while he swung something over the side of the vessel.

"Mackintosh, don't I tell you," shouted the marine. "Mr. Smallweed's left it. It might rain. Catch!"

"Might rain. Looks like it," grumbled Jack, catching the garment dexterously. "Been grilling hot these past ten days, and 'e says it might rain! Got any more things for Mr. Smallweed?"

"No; nothing."

"Then clear off, and have everything ready for his return," commanded the sailor in as lofty a tone as even Dereck could have commanded. "We'll be back towards evenin', and when we come you can expect to hear that we've took the whole Dardanelles, and our boys are on the way to Constantinople."

There was laughter at that, laughter in which Dereck joined loudly. For, to tell the truth, everyone was in the very best of spirits this grey, misty, moonlit early morning. Those thousands of khaki soldiers who had been manning the long length of the Suez

Canal, and who had so emphatically beaten back the attack made by the Turks upon their positions, felt that at last they were to be rewarded for all their waiting, for all the grilling hours they had put up with along the Canal zone, and were to be at length employed in doing something—in engaging in a fight, in fact, which had for its aim the capture of the Gallipoli peninsula, and the taking in reverse of those formidable forts which lined the "Narrows", the constricted portion of the waterway running between the peninsula they were then about to attack and the coast of Asia Minor—the doorway, in fact, to Constantinople and the Black Sea.

Swarming down the gangways, those khaki heroes dropped somewhat heavily into the barges waiting for them, for each man carried an ample supply of ammunition, three days' rations, and a pack—a weight which tried those inclined to weakness. Not that there was any weakness observable amongst these Australian and New Zealand fellows. A magnificent set of men they looked, well-set-up and sturdy to a degree, bronzed by an Egyptian sun far more deeply even than they were wont to be in their own native quarters. As for being down-hearted or nervous at the ordeal before them, their merry looks, their jovial calls to one another, and the eagerness depicted in their faces gave even the bare suggestion the lie.

"Fit as they make 'em," observed one of their officers, superintending the movement of his men from the deck of the cruiser. "All aboard the barges, sir," he reported, saluting the naval officer beside him.

"Then carry on, Captain Thurston. And—and

good luck, my boy! Good luck to you and every one of those fine, gallant fellows! Mr. Smallweed——"

He stood at the top of the gangway and called to the "snottie".

"Yes, sir."

"You've got your party embarked, and I see they're ready at the other ships. Haul your 'tow' away from the cruiser, and stand off till you get the signal. You've had your orders already. This ship expects that you and the men you command will land these troops in the face of all obstacles, land 'em smartly, Mr. Smallweed, and at the very spot appointed."

"Aye, aye, sir." Dereck touched his cap with true nautical smartness.

"Give her steam," he called sharply to the man in charge of the engines. "Barnsby, just see that those hauling-ropes don't foul, and—and we're off!"

He could have flung his cap into the air and shouted; could have cracked jokes with the men in the pinnace, and flung grimaces at the Australian and New Zealand contingents in the barges. For this was what he and his messmates had been eagerly waiting for; the men collected near the scene of the coming operations had been simply longing for this to happen. It was the hour for action, for a descent to be made upon the country held by the enemy; the moment for the sons of Great Britain to prove their courage, and test whether they or the Turks and their German leaders were the better men.

"Mr. Fergusson, I'll trouble you to keep your barges off a little," sang out Dereck coldly, presenting his megaphone at a neighbouring pinnace which

had just hauled a "tow" of four barges laden with soldiers from an adjacent cruiser. "We ain't here to be barged into. We're out for business, not to be sunk before we can get our lot ashore. Stand off a little, please."

The "please" was in Dereck's iciest and most lofty tones, and caused the gallant Mr. Fergusson, a "snottie" like Dereck, to flush furiously. Also, it caused Dereck's crew to grin, and wink sideways at one another.

"Only 'is go, that's all," the bulky Jack whispered to his neighbour. "'E's just worked up, is Mr. Smallweed, and that there Mr. Fergusson always did annoy him. Aye, aye, sir. Tow-ropes clear. There's the signal."

If there had not been urgent need for silence, cheers would have burst from the men collected upon the many barges at that moment being hauled away from the sides of the numerous war-vessels then lying within easy reach of the peninsula. But it was more than urgent—it was imperative—that no inkling of the projected attack should reach the Turks, who were known to have made the fullest preparations to prevent a landing. Indeed, nowhere else perhaps could British forces have discovered a spot where a landing was likely to be more difficult; for the coast of the Gallipoli peninsula is a steep cliff in practically all directions, and offers only in a few places the possibility of a landing. Even there, where the sea has broken down the rocky barrier and has caused landslides and a gap in the otherwise unbroken line of cliffs, the beaches are dangerously narrow and steep,

and, worse than all, are exposed to a concentrated rifle- and gun-fire from an enemy who chooses to line the ridges above. That the Turks would choose to do this went without saying. It was more than probable, in fact, that they and their German teachers had honeycombed the ridges with trenches and with machine-gun emplacements, and that they had erected every species of obstacle known to belligerents to prevent a hostile landing.

Yet the British were to attempt it, they and their French allies; and on the morning when Dereck slipped down the gangway of the cruiser and took his place in the pinnace, there were thousands of soldiers making ready to beard the Turk and the German.

"A wonderful sight!" Claude had told his cousin Hal, as they sat on the deck of the cruiser on the previous evening. "A fellow would find it hard to count all the vessels here, for what with mine-sweepers, mine-layers, trawlers, barges, and battleships, there must be an enormous number. And to think that Dereck is to escort us to the landing! It's fine. He'll put us ashore whatever happens, and then——"

"Then it's up to us to finish the business," Hal told him. "Only it'll want doing. I've had my glasses on the shore at odds and ends of moments during the past few hours, and one can see that there have been preparations. One can catch a glimpse of the ragged edges of trenches, and more than once I thought I saw Turkish soldiers. Well, I'll be glad when we get in at it."

That was the feeling of them all. Indeed, it was hard to curb the enthusiasm of the Australians and

New Zealanders, of the gallant Lancashire Territorials, of the Naval Division assembled for this purpose, and of the Indian troops who were also to take part in the landing. As to the French, who could doubt their determination? If they had been allowed, those fine Gallic troops, both white and coloured, would have cheered their British comrades hoarsely as they, too, put off from the war vessels on this eventful morning.

"There's the signal, sir. Flagship's a-sending it."

Jack called to his young officer, and saw Dereck look coolly across in the direction indicated. Through the pale moonbeams and dull-grey mist of the early morning—a mist rapidly lifting and already brightened in the far east by the first rays of the rising sun—he could see the outline of the gigantic Dreadnought on which the Admiral flew his flag; could see, indeed, the dull outlines of a hundred other vessels, cruisers near at hand, all with "tows" of barges lying off them, with steam pinnaces ahead and a midshipman in command of the landing. There were trawlers, too, looking a little incongruous out there in those deep, blue waters, and as if they missed the cold and the buffeting of the North Sea. They also had barges towing beside them; and farther off there was one solitary vessel which had attracted all eyes on the previous evening. For this was the *River Clyde*, since come to be known as "the Horse of Troy", crammed at the moment of which we speak with our men, and destined within a few short minutes to be run ashore at one of the beaches selected for a landing, in the hope that thereby the Turks might be outwitted.

Yes, it was a stirring scene which Dereck looked out on as he peered through the rising mist to observe that signal—that signal which was to send men to their death, men to wounds and glory, and more men still to triumph, to the successful accomplishment of a task which might well have caused the boldest to quail, but which was faced with eagerness, with merriment and laughter, indeed, by the gallant khaki host then bearing down on the peninsula.

"Give her steam. Gently does it," sang out Mr. Midshipman Smallweed. "More there. Mr. Fergusson's getting ahead of us, and that can't be allowed for a moment. That's got 'em moving."

It took quite a number of revolutions of the pinnace's propeller to get the heavily-laden barges in motion, and by then, much to Dereck's chagrin, his brother officer's "tow" was drawing ahead. But every man aboard his own little craft was just as eager as he was, from Jack Barnsby down to the latest-joined sailor; and they worked with a will, flung fuel on to the fire with an energy which there was no denying, and by hook or by crook soon brought their own command on a level with their rival.

"Getting lighter. Can see the cliffs," remarked Dereck.

"Aye, aye, sir. Guns'll be at work in a moment. There's one of 'em."

"Enemy. Hang!" cried the "snottie". "Looks as if they had spotted us. But they ain't going to stop us, not much, eh?"

"Certain sure, sir," Jack told him with decision. "That gun's been fired as a warning, to wake up the

Turks all along the coast and to tell 'em to make ready. There's another, and——"

Dereck stood up and scowled. Then he turned and grinned at his men.

"Might have been a mile away," he smiled, pointing to where a Turkish shell had burst and had splattered the surface of the sea with shrapnel. "Give us a little more steam, please. We seem to be hanging back a little, and that's a thing that they don't say as a rule of our vessel."

As a matter of fact, the sturdy little pinnace was going ahead quite nicely, tearing through the water at great speed considering the weight of the barges behind her. Yet to Dereck and his men they seemed to be only crawling, while the nearest "tow" looked as if it were going to draw away from them. As to the men in the barges, those gallant Colonials, some sat on the thwarts of the huge, flat-bottomed boats, splashed now and again by the water through which they were moving, for their gunwales were barely six inches above the surface. Others stood—indeed the majority were standing. And as the men smoked and chatted, every eye was turned toward the cliffs of Gallipoli, toward the narrow break in the cliffs to which they were making. Not a man flinched as that Turkish gun opened fire, though exclamations burst from many. But what a cheer they gave when at length they were nearer and all need for silence was gone—when it was clear, in fact, that the enemy knew of their coming and was ready for them!

Crash! Bang!

"Ships starting in to smash their trenches," Dereck

told his men. "That'll make 'em sit up. Ah! Hurt, Barnsby?"

"Not me, sir, thank'ee. Just a rap over the head from one of their shrapnel bullets. I'll get even with 'em for it before the day's done. That's it, mate. Tie a handkerchief round my head. It's a scratch, and only the blood wants stopping."

Bizz! Bullets were beginning to flash by the pinnace, and already more than one of the Colonials had been struck by these Turkish missiles. Every moment Dereck's pinnace was hauling the barges nearer, and every second as they advanced toward the beach of Gaba Tepe, the particular spot selected for a Colonial landing, the resistance offered by the enemy to their approach became greater.

"Shot through our funnel. Hooray! Give her more steam then," shouted Dereck, careless of the whispering bullets now flying past him, and fascinated not a little by the numerous splashes they made in the water on either side of the pinnace. "Up with that helm a little. That's enough. It'll send us straight on for the point to which we're ordered. Ha! Claude, ahoy!"

He had caught a glimpse of his cousin at that second, and they waved eagerly to one another.

"Get us there as fast as you can, Dereck boy," the New Zealander shouted—a wish which brought shouts from the men about him. It brought cheers from the Colonials in the barges towing astern, and sent Dereck to the stern of his pinnace. There, standing just behind the steersman, megaphone in hand, he watched eagerly as the beach seemed to rush toward him. There were splashes of flame, he noticed—

splashes coming from dense scrub growing on the steep slopes mounting from the beach to the ridges above—and once some heads showed to the left while a machine-gun rattled. Then all other sounds were drowned by the roar of guns from the ships behind, by the loud wail of the shells coming, and later by the crash as those missiles exploded. That brushwood leading from the beach, the broken ridges above, the ground to right and left over which the landing-party must advance were covered with smoke, from which blinding flashes of yellowish-green flame burst every other second. Huge balls of white smoke suddenly came into being but a few yards in front of him and high up over that narrow beach, while the ground was churned by the thousands of shrapnel bullets cast in every direction.

But still the sea around was pattered into hundreds and hundreds of tiny fountains by Turkish bullets, while puffs of smoke, smaller than those caused by the shrapnel fired from the ships behind them, burst high above the barges, churning the sea into foam. And what of the men? Dereck cast a swift glance back at them, and then on either side.

"Stunning!" he thought. "Keen as mustard, and don't seem to take any notice of their losses. Ahoy there, Fergusson! I'm almost ashore. Give your old barge a bit more steam, or you'll be too late for the party."

It was just like the gallant midshipman to have a jest at such a moment. It was like him, too, to flush with pride as he realized that he had won in the race which they had been running. For the keel of the

pinnace grated on the shore. Then she floated clear and rushed on a few yards farther, only to be brought up with a sudden jerk which would have deposited Dereck in the well if it hadn't been for Jack Barnsby. Meanwhile, to their right, other pinnaces in charge of other just as dashing midshipmen were bringing their "tows" ashore; and so well had the manœuvre been managed, so thoroughly had these young officers obeyed their instructions, that the heavy barges they brought with them were within speaking distance of one another, and but a few yards off the shore.

"Cast off that tow-line," bellowed Dereck through his megaphone. "Out oars there. Hooray! Those Australian boys ain't afraid of a wetting."

It was a scene of the utmost movement and excitement—a time, nevertheless, when every man aboard those barges kept his head and tempered the dash with which he was filled with a certain amount of discretion. Oars were thrust from the sides of the barges most distant from the beach, while men leaped into the water from those which were nearest. Officers shouted orders to their men, and even before the gallant Dereck could wade ashore some of the Colonials were mustering. There was a mere handful of them, to be sure, some thirty altogether, with Claude's huge figure before them. Dereck gaped as he saw the New Zealander turn and face the cliffs then spitting bullets at him. And then how he cheered as the party dashed across the sand and went scrambling up the steep slope towards the enemy!

"Fall in. Fall in over here. Fix bayonets! Now, boys, there's the enemy."

It was Hal this time, Hal the gallant Australian, his slouch hat gone, one puttee dragging. Waving his rifle overhead he went on up that cliff in another direction, not casting a glance behind him. For Hal knew what every other officer amongst those fine Colonials knew. They were well aware that not a single man of theirs would hang back because of danger, and that one call was enough. Indeed, those same officers knew well enough that, far from fearing that they would not be supported, their real difficulty all through would be to keep their men from rushing into unnecessary danger.

What a wonderful sight it was, and how terribly full of movement! Those huge shells from the ships at sea were still falling, still thudding on to the slopes above, where Turkish trenches had been constructed, and from which a hail of bullets still flew in the direction of the landing-party. The rattle of rifles and machine-guns filled the air when the explosion of those gigantic shells did not drown such sounds entirely. Men shouted. Officers called to them, gathered a few from here and from there, and seeing a Turkish head, launched their following in that direction. To the right, to the left, half-way up the steep slopes and ridges, and down in the water there were still figures, the figures of Colonials who had fallen. Behind a ridge of sand, half a dozen of them were sitting up and smoking, while a "bearer" from the field ambulance bandaged their injuries; and already at one corner of the beach, behind the little protection given by another ridge of sand, there was a group of busy people above whose heads waved a

Red Cross flag. As to the sea, it was still lashed into a frenzy by Turkish bullets, and still presented those barges, some already filling with wounded, and others empty.

"All ashore?" asked Mr. Midshipman Smallweed, lighting a cigarette, and scowling as a Turkish shell cast a sheet of water over him. "Then make fast that tow-line again. Lively does it, lads. We've other boys to bring, and from the look of things they'll want 'em here. Push her off. Shove her head round. Give her steam. There we go, and soon we'll be back with reinforcements."

That was only one of the landings attempted by the British and French forces on this eventful morning of the 25th of April, but one which so far had succeeded because of the dash and the sheer bravery of the Colonials. In spite of Turkish preparations, in spite of it being certain that Gaba Tepe must be selected as a landing-place if the enemy wished to land on the peninsula, the Australians and the New Zealanders had accomplished the almost impossible. Those bullets and shells could not stop them. Not all the barbed-wire entanglements stretched across the steep slopes of the cliff or across the beach itself, or even in the sea beyond it, could keep them away. They fought their way upward inch by inch, caring nothing for losses. They stormed the nearest Turkish trenches, captured machine-guns and snipers, and in spite of the most heroic and stubborn bravery on the part of the enemy, defeated him. Already, as Dereck shot away from the beach, they had their teeth into the peninsula, and when he returned again the mar-

vellous Colonials had established themselves firmly. They were "dug in" here and there. They were creeping forward in other directions, and already they had given Turkish snipers a salutary lesson.

"Yes," said Claude, when he and Hal accosted Dereck that evening, and the three sat down for a hasty meal on the beach; "yes, my boy, while it lasted that Arab business of ours was a mere picnic. Losses! Of course we've had 'em, and expected more. But that won't stop us. Just fancy, we've done the very thing the Germans and the Turks said was absolutely impossible."

And so they had. The following morning found a hitherto somewhat precarious footing on the portion at Gaba Tepe converted into a defensive position of some strength—of some strength, that is, when backed by Colonial bayonets. It discovered the fact that those selfsame Colonials had spent an eventful night, and had broken Turkish attacks made upon them.

More than all, perhaps, for the sake of this story, it discovered Hal and Claude unscathed, as well as the lively Dereck.

"Hang their bullets!" the latter grumbled in the midst of a mouthful, as a Turkish missile struck the sand by his side. "Can't they let a fellow eat in peace even! But, I say, have either of you fellows seen Alphonse?"

"Sorry, but I had forgotten all about him in the midst of this business," Claude admitted. "How is he? Of course, he's acting as an interpreter."

"And now," said Dereck solemnly, "now he's vanished."

"Vanished! But——" began Hal.

"But where, yes, certainly," the midshipman followed. "He came ashore with the second party. I'm told he was seen storming up the cliffs with some of your men. Then he disappeared. He's——"

"Missing," suggested Claude sadly.

"Yes, missing," Dereck admitted.

"Which means anything," reflected Hal, lighting a cigarette and puffing at it to hide his emotion, for the cousins had become very fond of Alphonse.

"Which means—which means that he may be lying out there in front of our trenches," Claude told them. "In that case we shall know for certain as we advance. If not——"

"If not, he's a prisoner and must be rescued. Eh?" asked Dereck, peering at them each in turn.

Who could even guess correctly what had befallen their comrade? But if he had come alive through this terrible day of fighting, even if he were a prisoner in the hands of the enemy, each one of those cousins registered a vow that he would find him.

"Because," thought Dereck, as he left Claude and Hal and went off to his pinnace, "because there's a special reason. Alphonse wouldn't be an ordinary prisoner. The Turks and their German masters might treat him well enough; but there's that Otto Scholz. We heard news that he had gone to the isthmus; and if he has, and he stumbles up against his French cousin—well, there it is. I'm going to find Alphonse. He did a lot for us, and we ain't going to leave him in the lurch, whatever happens."

CHAPTER XIV

How Britons Landed on Gallipoli

NEVER before in all the history of British fighting have troops done more magnificent work than our men did on that eventful 25th of April, 1915, and never again will the feat of arms which those covering parties accomplished on the broken shores of the Gallipoli peninsula be surpassed, however hard our gallant fellows may strive, however dire may be the need for fighting. For on this day of days the expedition sent to Gallipoli created a record; contrived by sheer gallantry and a display of most magnificent grit to accomplish the seemingly impossible. Those fine Colonial troops, cast ashore at Gaba Tepe by Dereck and many another "snottie", had forced a landing against tremendous odds, and had secured a firm foothold in spite of the utmost efforts of the enemy. But they were not the only troops to meet the Turks; not the only gallant souls to land upon enemy territory and secure a footing in the face of a murderous fire. There were other heroes, indeed—Lancashire heroes, heroes from the Regular forces, Indian soldiers filled with daring and dash, and Frenchmen who made nothing of the Turk and his firing.

"It's the first stage in our attack upon Constanti-

nople," Dereck's commander told him. "You may say that we've just managed to get hold of the knocker of the door. In the next few days we'll lift it and bring it down with a bang. Then the lock'll be forced, and afterwards——"

"Yes, sir?" said Dereck attentively.

"Afterwards—well, once the forts are conquered, Constantinople will open its doors. We shall sail up the Golden Horn till we lie off the Sultan's palace. Then the Russians will come across the Black Sea, and Britain and France will have accomplished their purpose, and will have joined hands with their ally, Russia."

"But first, the forts must fall. Yes, sir."

"Naturally. And to prevent our getting to close quarters the Turks have seized the highest bit of country at this end of Gallipoli. You can see it over there—Achi Baba: a height which dominates the end of the peninsula, and from the summit of which guns well placed could pound the forts that line either side of the 'Narrows'. Our job is to drive 'em back till we have possession of that height, and for that purpose we have landed parties at the very end of the peninsula. The Colonials have been thrown ashore more to the north, so as to threaten the enemy's lines of communication and thereby co-operate with the forces lower down. Young Dereck, time you cleared off with your pinnace."

The middy saluted in his smartest manner and went dancing down the gangway. Boarding his pinnace with a bound he shouted an order to the man in charge of the engine, and sent his boat forging her

way back toward the landing at Gaba Tepe. Behind him he towed those same four barges, each one laden with food or with ammunition or with other supplies, and bearing in its very centre a field-gun, which was to be landed on the peninsula.

"Ahoy there!" he shouted, arriving within hailing distance, and ignoring the bullets which whizzed past his head, for Turkish snipers were ever busy. Good shots as a rule, they had been taught by their German leaders to adopt every form of artifice likely to promote their success and baffle their enemy. Turkish marksmen lay in thick patches of brushwood, with leaves and branches attached to their heads and shoulders, thus escaping observation, for it must be recollected that modern explosives give rise to little or no smoke. Others, with their faces and hands and clothing stained green, and even their rifles coloured, crept along shallow ditches and dongas, and, taking advantage of every scrap of cover and every post likely to give them a good view of the British, sent shot after shot into the trenches or in amongst the men swarming on the captured beaches. Also the Turkish guns were never at rest. Day and night shrapnel burst over the trenches and the landing-places down below, splashing dust and sand in a hundred parts, and sending the sea rising in tiny fountains or in huge sheets of spray in every direction.

"Bah! Let 'em fire!" the stoical Dereck cried, bringing his pinnace ashore with a bang, and then turning to superintend the operation of hauling the barges close in. "That was a near one, eh, Fergusson? Jolly this, what do you think? Never imagined

they'd put the landing operations in the hands of us fellows."

That made the worthy Fergusson positively blush. He was a youth somewhat devoid of imagination, and given to carrying out his duties without particular enthusiasm or even without great interest. He lacked Dereck's joviality, though he was well endowed with courage. And certainly he lacked his cheek.

"Put the operations in our hands!" he exclaimed, his mouth wide open. "But—er—surely—are they? I thought that we midshipmen merely——"

"Merely looked on and twiddled our thumbs, eh?" exclaimed the irate Dereck. "As if anyone couldn't see that we were in the thick of the business. How'd they have got the tows ashore without us middies? that's what I want to know. And how on earth——"

A sheet of spray put an end to the Hon. Dereck's questions. A Turkish shell had skimmed close to the pinnace, and had carried with it a shower of sand from the beach and a wide sheet of water. The missile hissed by Dereck's head, and hurtling onward plunged to the bottom of the ocean.

"Of all the brutes!" shouted Dereck, shaking himself like some big dog. "What'd they do that for, covering a fellow with sand and water, and——"

There was disgust, indignation, outraged dignity written on his handsome face as insult was added to insult. For another shell bowled over the pinnace, missing it and its gallant commander by a narrow margin, and once more sprinkling Dereck with a liberal shower of earth and water.

"Just watch 'im," growled the jovial Jack, a mem-

ber of the pinnace's crew. "Ain't 'e just like 'is pa? I've seed the Admiral a-lookin' about him indignant-like, just like his son here, and a-cussin' when the shells was fallin'. Oh, ain't 'e a treasure! He's a-dryin' 'isself with a handkerchief that's gaudy enough to attract every Turkish soldier, and he's a-lookin' at his togs as if they was more important to him than a whole skin. Best get under cover fer a bit, beggin' pardon, Mr. Smallweed," he observed, for the exposed position of the young officer was most pronounced, and snipers were busily at work without a doubt. Indeed, the livelong day a few of them lay in some scrub far up the steep cliff facing the beach at Gaba Tepe, and practised their special calling. Bullets snipped their way through the gunwale of the pinnace as Jack spoke, while two of them sent the water rising into a fountain almost at Dereck's feet. An instant later there came the sharp snap of the weapons, for there was little or no firing from the trenches at that moment.

"Best give them Turks a rest for a while, sir. They've marked you down, and though it's as clear as clear that you don't give a red cent for their shots, there's some of the men might get hit. Ain't you got a message for one of the orfficers?"

Dereck had. He had a special message for Claude, and thought this a most excellent opportunity of conveying it to him. Remembering the fact now that the crafty Jack had reminded him, he left the pinnace, and, springing ashore, walked briskly across the open beach to the spot where the "sappers" were already at work constructing an easy road to the summit of

the cliff above. And meanwhile his men lay full length in the pinnace, while half a dozen marines aboard the barges fixed their eyes on the scrub from which those bullets appeared to have been coming, and made ready to shoot down the snipers. Dereck found his two cousins together, seated side by side in a hastily-dug trench, munching their midday meal.

"Just in time. Always is, when the grub's around," laughed Claude. "Well, tell us how the fellows have been doing in the other landing forces."

Dereck told them quickly, with a note of pride and triumph in his voice.

"It's been magnificent, the whole affair," he said, his eyes sparkling. "Of course, you fellows know all about the Australian and New Zealand landing."

"Rather!" Hal assured him with vigour. "Folks who know—Staff officers, I mean, fellows who have seen fighting in France—tell us that the fighting here was the fiercest they ever saw. It was hot stuff, Dereck. It'll be hotter still before it's finished."

"And of course we've lost a heap of men," Claude said. "That can't be helped. We were put ashore to do the job, and we've done it. Well, what about the others?"

"Stunning! At the beach below Sedd-el-Bahr our chaps met with almost fiercer resistance than you fellows had to face. But they rowed themselves ashore, and went in at the business with a vengeance. Of course, the ships had knocked the old fortress of Sedd-el Bahr about before the attempted landing, and

continued to splutter shrapnel all over the place after our men landed. But still there were hundreds of Turks to oppose our men. However, they went at it like good 'uns, and reached the top of the cliff, breaking their way through barbed wire and all sorts of obstructions. But they weren't firmly posted even when they had reached the level of the first slope. There were more obstructions, more Turkish trenches, some of 'em so placed that they enfiladed our chaps."

"Same here," growled Claude. "But we've got cover from 'em now. Bah! That's another of our men shot down by the snipers. We'll have to send out a little expedition. How'd you like to come, Dereck?"

Just at that instant one of the Australians standing in the trench, not far from where the three cousins were crouching, had suddenly given vent to a sharp cry and had subsided in the bottom of the trench. Bending over him Claude and Hal found him bleeding from a slight wound in the head which had stunned him.

"Kangaroo Bill! What a shame!" cried Claude. "He is known as Kangaroo Bill throughout the Division, I suppose because he is lanky and active. That's the fourth man we've had wounded to-day. We must put a stop to it. Hal, call up the sergeant. Ah, Sergeant!" he went on, a minute later, when a fine, brawny man had come along the trench and stood crouching before him, for to stand upright was to court a sniper's bullet. "You've an idea where these snipers are located?"

"Just an idea, sir. The men are furious."

"Naturally. Ask for a couple of volunteers. I'm going out in the course of a few minutes, and I mean to try to bag some of those ruffians."

"Volunteers! Why, every man jack of 'em'll be that, sir," the sergeant told him promptly. "There isn't one who isn't itching to catch those sneaks skulking in the scrub and shooting down our fellows. Two only, sir?"

"Two only."

"In ten minutes, sir?"

"Yes."

"You could have fifty of 'em by then, sir, if you wanted," the sergeant grinned as he went off.

"Now, get on with the yarn," the huge New Zealander commanded his cousin. "You were talking of Sedd-el-Bahr."

"Yes. So I was. But—but about these snipers. You'll take me, eh?"

Dereck's face was purple with anticipation, with excitement and eagerness.

"You—well now——"

"But—but you invited me just now," gasped the middy.

"That's true. But then, I reflected since that you ain't one of us. You ain't got no business up here. If one of those Staff officers were to see you——"

"Blow the Staff officers!" cried Dereck. "You invited me to go on an expedition against the snipers, and I'll hold you to it. Besides, the bounders were plugging at me when I was down below there in the pinnace. Ain't that enough to give a fellow the right——"

A sharp exclamation farther along the trench, just beyond the second traverse, stopped him for a moment.

"Another of our men shot by snipers," reported the sergeant, coming to them just then. "Through the shoulder this time, which isn't so bad. That reminds me. Kangaroo Bill's fit again and returned to duty. There's two volunteers along the trench, sir, and there's almost been a fight amongst the men to decide who was to go. They're ready any moment."

"Then finish the yarn, Dereck," his cousin cried. "Those fellows got ashore."

"Yes. The *River Clyde*, an old collier, went with the covering party, and was run ashore. She was stuffed full of troops, and as soon as barges had been hauled into position and a gangway laid, the fellows came bursting out of ports cut in her sides. Lots of 'em got shot down, for the Turks had the range. But plenty of 'em reached the beach, and soon had joined the others. Meanwhile another covering party had landed at Cape Helles, just to the left, and pushing the Turks back in the same way, they too gained the ridge. They found 'emselves up against very strong entanglements; but that didn't matter. They sapped right up to them, cut 'em through, and rushed the wily Turk. By now they've joined hands with the fellows on their right and left, for there was a landing at Cape Teke, farther along in this direction. As for the French, they went ashore on the Asiatic coast, at Kum Kali, just to distract the enemy. But I hear they're now about to put a force on Gallipoli some

where in the neighbourhood of Morto Bay, where they'll join hands with the rest of the boys and advance with 'em against Achi Baba. Now, Claude, what about this sniper business?"

For a while the three still crouched in their trench, each one viewing the ground in front of him through a periscope. Farther along the trench there were other similar instruments in use, while the observers endeavoured to make sure of the position of those Turkish snipers who were paying them attention.

"Let one of the men put his hat up on a stick," Claude commanded the sergeant. "Only one hat, mind, otherwise they'd smell a rat. Ah! There they go. See anything, Dereck?"

"A bush move, that's all. Thought there was a flash below it, but I'm not sure."

"I am—that is, if we're speaking of the same bush," Hal called out. "Look again, Dereck. The bush I mean is at the edge of a ragged *nullah* just on the fringe of the scrub on the far side, and about twenty yards from that patch of open ground which breaks into the scrub. What about the hat?"

"Shot through. Riddled," the sergeant reported.

"Put up another nearer this way," Claude ordered. "Now."

"Same place," reported Dereck, his face burning with excitement.

"Same place," echoed Hal, "and from a point just a little higher. "I believe that there's a bunch of Turkish snipers all together."

"Then we'll see what we can do with 'em. Pass the word down the trench that no one is to show him-

self. Observers will use periscopes, and make sure that they do nothing to attract the enemy till I send Hal a signal. We'll post marksmen farther along, with orders to keep down hostile fire should we be discovered; and when we're safely in this end of the *nullah*, Hal will get one man to put his hat up, and repeat the dodge as soon as it's shot through, moving the position of the dummy as often as necessary. The idea is to keep their attention engaged in a direction away from the *nullah* we propose to use, and so enable us to get near 'em. Then we'll rush the brutes. Dereck, you'd better think it over twice. You ain't one of us. You belong to the Navy and——"

"Rot! As if the Navy wasn't every bit as good as the Army! Now look here——" began Mr. Midshipman Smallweed, hotly, indignantly in fact, for wasn't he simply palpitating with eagerness to take part in such an adventure?

"Oh, well, if you must you must. Get hold of a rifle and fixed bayonet. Sling off that white cap of yours, Dereck," Claude commanded; "and do, for goodness' sake, remember that you ain't on your pinnace. It's all very well for you to stand aboard there in full view, puffing bad cigarettes and shouting threats through a megaphone at young Fergusson or some other particular pal. But—but here it's different. We're closer up. If you show a finger you'll draw fire, and ten to one others——"

Dereck took the rifle and bayonet Hal handed him, took it with glee, and grimaced at his huge cousin.

"When you've done," he growled, tucking his

sleeves up. "I'd draw fire! Yes, of course, and—and others might be shot. Well, if you're funked——"

Hal grinned. This was Dereck Smallweed as his cousins knew him—Dereck blazing with eagerness and righteous indignation, Dereck scoffing and gibing that he might goad Claude into giving his consent to his joining a dangerous expedition.

"Come on," growled Claude. "I've been a fool to invite you. But there it is. Send the men along, Hal, and carry out those instructions. Of course, if they spot us we'll lie low till the band's done playing. When they have given up shooting over us we'll crawl back. Now, pass the word along that our fellows may know what we're up to. I bar being shot down by our own men. The Turks are a different matter altogether."

By then the two volunteers who had been selected from some fifty or more eager and almost indignant individuals had joined Claude and Dereck; and leaving Hal and the sergeant to carry out their orders, the little party crept along the trench, squeezing past the men who manned it, and passing round a dozen roughly-constructed traverses before they had reached their destination. For this was no exhibition trench, excavated under peace conditions, or in rear of a fighting army. It was an earth burrow delved under heavy fire at close quarters, a trench dug in haste, with furious energy, by men who risked their lives all the while, and who would never have extracted a spadeful but for the covering fire of their comrades lying stretched on the ground near them.

"Here we are. The trench runs right up to, and

joins with the *nullah* I pointed out," Claude told his cousin. "Let's decide our plans. First, see that your weapon is loaded and the lock at safety. It's sometimes more dangerous to be crawling just in front of one of your own side than to be in full view of the enemy. Rifles go off."

"Meant to," Dereck answered tartly. "There! Mine's loaded and at 'safety'. Next?"

"Next we'll hunt in couples. Jack Slingsby'll go with you, Dereck. Jack, this is my sailor cousin. Jack's an old chum of mine," he explained to his cousin. "Born within a biscuit-throw, and full of gumption. It's just chance that I've a commission and he hasn't. Tim Redwald'll come with me. There'll be room for two of us to creep side by side up the *nullah*. Then we'll have to look out for a ditch branching away from it. That'll let us separate, and if our fellows draw fire from the enemy in proper style, the snap of their weapons will show us pretty plainly where the snipers are sneaking. We'll get in closer then, and give 'em a volley. Then we'll go for 'em with the bayonet. One thing more. As soon as the business is over, duck for your lives and dive into the *nullah*, for the whole hill-side will be alive. The Turks'll buzz like a hive of bees, and their bullets'll swarm over us and tear holes through the scrub. Ready?"

"Ready. Of course."

"Then come along."

They crept one by one from the end of the trench into the *nullah*. Then, facing uphill, Dereck and Claude side by side and in advance of the others, they

crawled slowly towards the lair of the Turkish snipers, never knowing when they might be observed and shot down, and wondering vaguely if they would ever reach their goal, and if this expedition would prove to be the end of all their adventures.

CHAPTER XV

Some Turkish Snipers

OVERHEAD a brilliantly blue sky, flecked by not so much as the suspicion of a cloud: and underfoot loose, sandy earth, in which a few pebbles were embedded—earth scored and seamed by rainfall and by torrential streams which poured in their season from the surface of the Gallipoli peninsula; a bed of earth, in fact, heaped on either side, delved deep into the surface of the ground, and flanked here and there by dense masses of green scrub which made the depths of the *nullah* as dark almost as it might be at midnight. That was the setting of the scene in which Dereck and Claude and their two soldier comrades found themselves as they crawled back from the trench held by the Colonial contingent and went on their way to stalk those troublesome Turkish snipers.

A rifle snapped somewhere behind them when they had crawled some twenty yards. Claude came to a sudden halt and looked back. Dereck did the same, and caught a brief glimpse of the distant sea, shimmering under the rays of a glorious midday sun, and supporting upon its blue surface a fleet of ships of every size, shape, and description. As he looked, smoke belched from the turret of one of the vessels, from the forward turret of the biggest of them all.

"Good old *Queen Elizabeth*!" grunted Dereck. "She'll give 'em socks. Listen to her shell coming."

They crouched close together for a while, listening, and peering into the scrub in front of them. There was a commotion now in the air above and behind them, while a roaring report set their nerves tingling, a report which seemed to shake the atmosphere, to shake even the sea and the land. As for the *Queen Elizabeth*, she had disappeared from sight behind a haze of smoke which the almost total absence of wind left hanging about her.

"Hear it?" asked Dereck in a whisper. "She's coming right overhead. Hope those fellows aboard the ship ain't spotted our snipers. They're our job, don't you know, and it'd be sneaky of 'em to come along when we're looking to the business. I——"

The commotion in the air above and behind was becoming more apparent. A deep, low-pitched boom filled all the vast space about the ocean and the extent of Gallipoli which it almost encircled. The boom became more insistent, more strident, with a tendency to a shriek, a shriek that carried toward and over their heads at a pace which was indescribable. And then—it cut Dereck's grumbles in half, and smothered his "grousing". For the *Queen Elizabeth's* monster shell had hit somewhere up above the *nullah* in which the middy and his chums were crouching, and somewhere beyond the patch of scrub for which they were aiming. No doubt it had thrust its way irresistibly into the earth till it was buried twenty feet beneath the surface. And then good British explosive had worked with some purpose. For a huge fountain of soil was

flung high into the air, a fountain of yellowish-red material which burst asunder as it rose—seemed to explode, in fact—while a yellowish blast of flame swept in all directions, burst its way outward and upward and downward, sweeping with hurricane force across the ground, tearing scrub up by the roots, levelling those few trees which happened to be near it—for the peninsula did not boast of many trees, at least not at the point where the British forces had landed—and sweeping every movable or insecurely-fixed article before it. Incidentally, that high-explosive shell from Britain's biggest battleship utterly destroyed and levelled and rendered obsolete some sixty yards of Turkish trenches, and so shook the surrounding ground that parapets of the same and other trenches farther off fell in, while the sides of some of these Turkish defences of unusual depth actually caved in, half-burying their occupants. As to Dereck and his friends, they felt the full force of that terrific, shattering detonation. A blast of suffocating, flaming air swept across the *nullah*, causing them to crouch closer even to the bottom.

"Bah! What did I say? That'll have done for those snipers," growled the middy, kneeling up now that the explosion was ended, and peering back at the ship. "My! There goes another. We'd just as well clear off back to the trench, for all the good we are likely to be doing."

"Shut up! There! Snipers again. I heard the single report of a rifle, followed by another."

Claude gripped his cousin's arm and shook it. Then both turned again seaward and listened. Yes; no

one could mistake that sound. A huge mass of metal, weighing, perhaps, a full ton and charged with high explosive, was sailing overhead—was forcing its way at such a pace through the still air that the latter protested, as it were. The friction which that enormous projectile set up was giving rise to such piercing sounds that even those fully accustomed to the sounds looked worried.

"Beastly things," growled Claude. "Hate 'em. Feel as if I'd never get used to 'em; and mind you, Dereck, we've had a good dose since we reached this place. The Turks have our range, and gave us a real benefit from the very commencement. You fellows aboard the ships have a soft job compared with the soldiers."

"And — and — I'd like to know——" spluttered Dereck; for this was the way to rouse the middy, and those who knew him often plotted how to "pull his leg" and arouse an explosion. "Soft job indeed! Let me tell you that——"

It was fate perhaps. More likely it was merely good luck which again put an end to his expostulations and "grousing". That second shell plumped into the ground a trifle closer than the first had done, and set the whole earth quivering. Indeed, it cast a cascade of light-coloured soil right over Claude and his companions, almost stifling them, and giving them some indication, if only a feeble one, of how it must be in the trenches nearer the spot where it had exploded.

"My—aunt!" gasped Dereck when it was over. "A chap can breathe at last. But—but isn't that some ship, as the Yanks would say? Some ship and some guns!"

"Not to mention shells, eh?" laughed Claude. "The *Queen Elizabeth* has upset the enemy not a little. Look at the way they're potting at her."

Fountains of water were marking the blue surface of the sea; fountains on which the sun's rays made delightful practice, which glistened pale-blue and white and golden, sprang up at the foot of transports, just behind a trawler used for mine-sweeping work, and within fifty yards of a hospital ship lying off the land. Guns roared from behind the Turkish front positions, from positions which only the observer aboard an aeroplane soaring overhead could locate, so well and so cleverly had the German leaders of this Turkish force concealed them. And then there was silence, a silence which was almost painful.

"There, again. Told you so. Those snipers ain't dead by a heap," Claude whispered, as a fusillade suddenly burst from a point somewhere above and in front of them. "Take a squint at our trench. Hal's diddling the enemy nicely. See the hat, eh? I can. There goes another shot, and the hat's gone."

"Those fellows are really clever," Dereck told him admiringly. "I saw an arm shoot up as the hat twiddled on the bayonet on which it was thrust upward. The Turkish snipers will have seen it too, and will have made sure someone was hit. That's the way to hold their attention, and if the *Queen Elizabeth* likes to go on shelling, why, all the better, only she must mind she don't interfere with our business."

"For more reasons than one. It'd be awkward to get into the middle of one of those burst-ups," grinned his cousin. "Come along. Let's get forward."

"Let's." Dereck smiled back at him, and gripped his rifle the firmer. He wasn't over-excited at this moment, not even thrilled, for we must remember that the gallant middy had smelled quite a deal of powder already. More than that; he and his cousins, with Alphonse and the lively Jack, had been away on a private expedition, special to themselves, where self-reliance was the essence of their safety, where they had had need to act and to fight for themselves, without hope or expectation of support from others. This was a similar thing.

"And, by Jove! we'll get through with the business," the middy told himself. "Hist! Stop! Look at that. Stick your head up through this scrub. It's a regular peep-show. Ain't they just enjoying themselves!"

Quite by chance he had lifted his head when passing beneath an overhanging mass of scrub, and had discovered something which caused him to call "Halt" to the party. For beneath that patch of scrub there was an opening, a species of natural tunnel formed by the vegetation, which ran clear and unobstructed for quite a distance, dark and obscure here and there, and lit as if by a window in certain places where the scrub failed entirely to complete the covering of the tunnel. In that tunnel, at its far end, were four men—Turks without a doubt—and beside them a German officer, who lay stretched on his face, peering through a pair of glasses. Just behind him there appeared the legs of another man, roughly swathed in khaki-green puttees, while just beyond him a rifle was poised in the air, as if it were held in readiness by a man who was sitting

and waiting in rear of his fellows. Dereck grimaced at his cousin.

"Hist! Be careful to keep your napper down behind the scrub," he whispered. "It's just as light beyond us as it is where they're sitting. They'd spot us at once if we were to show too much of our figures, and particularly if we showed our faces. Well?"

"The very spot. Wait! Look back. Here's an opening, and from it you can see our trench even better. There's a hat at the far end. That German officer is spotting it. Watch him."

They saw the man in question change his position. He sat up, and again glued his glasses to his eyes. Then, very slowly, he reached one hand out, having laid down his glasses, and felt for a rifle.

"Keeping his eye on the mark all the while, so that he won't miss it when he's ready," Claude whispered. "Snipin's a beastly job, though necessary, of course. But that chap's gloating. There! He's aiming. Snap! See the hat twiddle again, and look at the brute grinning."

"Let's charge 'em," Dereck suggested, his whisper hoarse and angry. "The dirty skunks! Snipin's necessary, very likely, though a dirty game at any time. But why must a German be here shooting good British men? Ain't the Kaiser and his War Lords, or whatever they call 'em—ain't they caused enough upset already, without coming along here and stirring the Turks to fight against us? Forcing them to, more likely. Supposing we were to rush 'em—dart along the tunnel after giving 'em a volley."

"Some of them would get away," the cautious and

now more experienced Claude told him. "We must fix 'em better than that. Some of us must get well above them. Then, at a signal, we'll give 'em a volley from two directions, if you can call two shots a volley, and then rush the beggars."

"Then you stick here. I'll go along up the donga with Jack. We'll look out for a spot, and when we've found it one of us will return to report. You sit tight. We'll be ready in a jiffy. Come on, Jack. You're keen, eh?"

The New Zealander smiled at the middy indulgently. He liked this fresh sailor, this jovial, high-spirited, and devil-may-care fellow.

"Ready," he nodded; and then, grinning widely, added: "and don't you get taking me into any dangerous places, Mr. Smallweed, please, for I've to report everything to my officer. Besides——"

"Besides, he's the most reckless, foolish, idiotic fellow in my platoon," Claude laughed. "Now—hist! They looked round just now. No, it wasn't because they suspected anything. It's Hal again attracting their attention, and this time in an altogether different spot. Good old Hal! He knows how to play the game. Get along with it, boys."

Dropping down into the bottom of the deep *nullah* which had given them shelter, Dereck and his Colonial companion crawled on upon hands and knees, listening every few seconds, and carefully peering through the scrub when the lie of the land and the growth of vegetation right up to and over the fissure they occupied gave them the opportunity.

It was after they had covered some two hundred

yards of the *nullah* that Dereck and his friend made an important discovery. By that time, what with the soft, wet earth at the bottom of this sinuous fissure in the ground—for in places where the thick vegetation kept the sun away, and so retained the moisture, the soil was soft and sticky—and with the drier stuff nearer the top edge of the *nullah*, where the sun's rays played upon it freely, which broke away at the smallest touch and dusted them from head to foot, the two of them looked as if they had been navvying all their lives. As a matter of fact they were a yellowish-red from head to foot, and in a measure, disagreeable though this might be, it was an excellent safeguard against discovery.

"Stop! Here's a tributary running into the main channel," said Dereck, coming to a jagged and irregularly-shaped cleft which broke its way into the left wall of the deep ditch wherein they were crawling. "That looks as if it came from the direction the enemy are occupying. Let's investigate."

"Certainly. Looks well. I'll follow," said the New Zealander.

Squeezing their way into this cleft, they found it deeper than the one they had been occupying, and distinctly narrower. It curved away to the right, at first through open ground, and then through a dense mass of scrub and bushes.

"Hist! One of those bushes moved." Dereck stopped of a sudden and lifted a warning finger. Jack came to an abrupt halt and stared before him. Then Dereck pointed, and pulling the soldier toward him whispered in his ear.

"Keep your head well down, and watch that bush ten yards away in front, quite close to the *nullah*. See anything?"

A hoarse exclamation burst from Jack some two minutes later, during which time they had stood silently, watching the particular bush to which the middy had pointed. For the whole bush was moving. It reared itself up, as if some magician were beneath it. Then it glided along the ground till closer to Dereck. A moment later it had dropped into the *nullah*.

Jack gasped and clutched the middy's arm. Dereck gripped his rifle with both hands, and, advancing a few feet, placed himself behind an angle in the *nullah*.

"Did you see the rifle and one of the fellow's legs?" he demanded in low tones. "I did."

"So did I," nodded the other.

"Then look out. If I fail, you go for him. But no firing, eh?"

"Stop! I'll get outside and drop down on him. A prisoner might be useful," suggested Jack swiftly, and, following his words with just as rapid action, quickly swarmed out of this narrow ditch and lay full length on the ground just above the site which Dereck had selected. A moment later he caught sight of the bush, and heard the short branches of which it was constructed brushing against the walls of the *nullah*. Then the bush reached the angle and turned round it.

As for Dereck, stooping low, with his weapon ready for emergencies, he too heard the sweeping sound of those branches, and a moment later caught sight of a figure, the front enveloped in scrub, the

shoulders and the head covered, and the arms and the face exposed. It was a Turkish marksman, a huge, lanky fellow, with a face covered with a stubbly beard and moustache. Catching sight of Dereck at the same identical moment, the fellow halted as if he had been struck, and fell back a pace. Then his mouth opened, while he made a desperate effort to turn round. But long before he could do that, or give rise to a shout, Dereck had flung himself upon him, while Jack leaned over and with a dexterous move seized the man's head, and clapped a hand over his mouth. The rest of the encounter was a mere matter of strength and seconds. Dereck was not yet full grown, though lusty enough in all conscience, and possessed of the courage and audacity of two. But Jack was a veritable giant, just like Claude; and what with the two of them, the Turk was pulled to the bottom of the *nullah*, where Jack sat on him. Then the middy set to work to secure him, and before very long had him gagged and bound, and as helpless as a bundle.

"A good place to attack the others from," he told Jack when the task was completed. "I've been thinking. Supposing we were to adopt the same sort of disguise. With scrub tied round us we could get even closer, and so make the most of a surprise. Supposing you tie these things on, I'll get back to Claude and tell him. Then we'll allow ten minutes in which to make preparations. How's that?"

"Good! And it'd be better, too, to bring Claude along, leaving the other man to fire into the enemy when the ten minutes have passed. By then we two and Claude could have bushes tied round us with our

belts, and could crawl across to the spot those Turks are occupying. They're sure to sit up and move when they're surprised. That'll show their positions to us, and we can go in at them."

Snap! From a spot within fifty yards a rifle report sounded, and was followed by two others in quick succession. Then there was a lull for a while, till a battery of field-guns, recently landed, and since then securely "dug in", opened upon the enemy, sending shrapnel over the *nullah* to burst above the Turkish trenches. That huge ship, too, fired her after guns, just a shell from each of them, setting the air throbbing, and shaking the peninsula. Taking advantage of the noise, Dereck scuttled back along the *nullah* till he had rejoined his cousin, to whom he rapidly narrated what had happened.

"It's a fine idea, this one of tying scrub about us," said Claude; "so fine, in fact, that it looks as if we'd have to make a heap of use of it in future. As to my joining you, why, of course that's just sense. Now, boy," he told the man with him, "you just take the time from me. Let's compare watches. Give us twelve minutes to make ready, and another three to get into position. Then let into those fellows at the end of the tunnel. It ain't nice shooting men down; but then they're sniping our fellows at this very instant, so they'll only get what they're giving. Let into 'em hard, and follow up by crawling along the tunnel and joining us. Then we'll all make for this cover, and so back home. Got it?"

The man grinned. Back in Australia he was a prosperous farmer, with a sheep-run to control amongst

other things, and with as much understanding as the man from "down under" usually possesses—that is to say, quite a considerable amount.

"Sure!" he answered crisply, switching off his safety bolt and levelling his rifle. "Twelve minutes to get ready. Three to get into position. Then bang! Afterwards, charge 'em for all I'm worth, and join up with the main party. Got it, sir?"

It wasn't a time for words but for action—strong action, too, for those Turkish snipers were not likely to be captured or killed without a stern struggle. Dereck led the way back to where Jack was waiting, and found him almost unrecognizable, looking indeed more like a bush which had been blasted from the open ground by one of those enormous shells from the sea and blown into the *nullah*. He greeted them with a grin.

"Not much doing," he reported. "A Turk, dressed like this one was, crawled towards the *nullah*, and I think he was looking for his chum. Then he went back. There's been nothing else. What's the order?"

"What we discussed. Keep a bright look-out while we collect bushes. There is a thick growth ten feet ahead. I'll cut some of it with my bayonet. Then we can make it fast to our waists with our belts. We've got to look slippy, or that fellow we've left at the end of the tunnel will be opening the ball before we're ready for dancing. How's that?" asked Dereck, when he had dragged Claude after him, and had slashed down a number of branches from the overhanging scrub.

"Nine minutes gone," reported his cousin. "All

present and correct, as they say in the army. Let's get along a little farther. Then we shall certainly be immediately behind the enemy. Halloo! Whoa!"

A figure had appeared at the edge of the scrub some twenty yards from them, and proved itself to be that of the German officer. He peered this way and that, and was presently joined by one of his men.

"The chap who came along as if hunting for his fellow," whispered Jack. "Perhaps they suspect something. They're puzzled, that's clear. Ah! Looks as if they were coming into the *nullah* to search for him."

"Down! Don't let them see so much as an eyelid," Dereck warned his comrades suddenly, for the German was sheltering behind a piece of scrub which grew to a greater height than the majority, and, with the help the additional elevation gave him, was peering into the *nullah*. It soon became evident, too, that he was not satisfied. He hesitated after advancing a couple of paces. Then he retreated, and beckoned to the Turk. Placing a whistle to his lips he blew a gentle call on it, and once more peered into the depths of the *nullah*. It was evident, in fact, that he was more than suspicious, and only awaited the coming of more of his men to leap into the place and explore it.

"Looks as if we were going to lose the advantage of a surprise," whispered Claude. "Wonder whether we ought to open the business by charging now."

"What's the time?" demanded Dereck. "Surely by now——"

There was a loud report on the right, some distance behind them. Then the weapon snapped again, while

a scream came from the depths of the scrub they were watching. As they looked, a man's head was erected above the vegetation. Then the lower portion of his body came into view, while the Turk flung his rifle above his head and clutched with his free hand at the branches all about him. But it was merely for a moment that he remained in full view. A second later he flopped back into the scrub, a howl escaping him as he tumbled.

Snap! That rifle exploded once more, bringing a shout from the German. He dived into the scrub as if the weapon had been aimed at him, while there was a decided commotion in the part toward which he was obviously making.

"The lair of the snipers," cried Claude, leaping from the *nullah*. "At 'em, boys. Charge! Forward!"

Dereck was beside his cousin in an instant, while Jack formed up on the other hand. Levelling their weapons, they poured a volley into the heart of the enemy's position. Then, with their breeches full and ready for another shot, they dashed toward the part where that wounded Turk had suddenly lifted his head above the vegetation. As for the enemy, they were taken so much by surprise that, had it not been for the German in command of them, they would perhaps have laid down their arms at once. As it was, fear forced them to follow him, and shouting and standing up now so that all could see them, they faced Dereck and his friends, and came charging toward them.

Ping! The German's pistol snapped, and Dereck had the distinct impression of something stirring his hair. Ping! the weapon went again, and this

time he knew that a bullet had perforated his clothing.

"But no damage done, eh, what?" he cried, for even in such a situation his old habit of speech did not leave him. "Then, here's to pay back."

He lifted his rifle to his shoulder, took rapid aim, and fired as the German sent another missile at him. Then, side by side with Claude and the Australian, he threw himself into the midst of the enemy. Stabbing this way and that, loosing off a cartridge when they had the opportunity, the three soon made an end of some of their opponents. And the advent of the fourth of the party brought an end to that portion of the contest.

"Ten of 'em killed or put out of action," said Claude rapidly. "Time to hop it. Look over there. The enemy are sending along a force to support their snipers. Come along. It's getting unhealthily warm here. Into the tunnel."

It was getting decidedly more than unhealthily warm. The storm of Turkish bullets which buzzed above the scrub was tremendous.

"Loosing off by whole battalions," grinned Dereck when they had again reached the *nullah*, by way of the green tunnel. "Listen to our fellows replying. Ten of 'em done for, did you say, Claude?"

"Ten of 'em and the German, and a fine lesson given to the enemy. Besides, we've learned something. After this, some of our fellows will go out every day done up into bundles of scrub, and if they don't put down this sniping I'm—well——"

"Exactly," cried Dereck, who never missed an opportunity. "A duffer! Don't tell us, Claude. We

—er—fellows get to know that sort of thing. But ain't 'duffer' a mild term? Why not——"

"If it weren't for the enemy and bullets and what not, I'd—I'd smash you," his cousin growled good-naturedly. "But—what about that chap you and Jack tied up and left higher up in the *nullah*?"

"I'll fetch him," declared Dereck. "He'd be a valuable prisoner. Hang on here for a bit. If I ain't back in a jiffy—well, you'll know," he told them, significantly.

And fetch him the gallant Dereck did, merely cutting the bonds which secured the man's feet, and commanding him to pass down the *nullah* in front of him. Then, bearing the prisoner with them, the party crawled back to the trench which they had so recently vacated.

"Jolly glad to see you all," Hal told them as they came along the trench. "But we haven't got time for a yarn, or even for greetings, now. That *coup* of yours seems to have roused the enemy into a passion. They're massing for what looks like an attack in force, so that all the men are standing to arms ready to repel 'em. We've signalled out to the ships, and if there ain't pandemonium before the night's finished, I'll be more surprised than I've been for many a day past. Burr! Shrapnel's never jolly. Jack Johnsons are a picnic beside 'em. But those shells from our ships must be terrible."

"Steady, men, there! Officers, see that there is an abundance of reserve ammunition. We've just had a telephone message in from the signal section to say that our aeroplane observers report huge concentrations of the Turks. Boys, you'll hold 'em up all right,"

declared the officer commanding Claude's particular battalion of Colonials. "Helloo, what's this?"

"Navy, sir," grinned Dereck, saluting briskly.

"My cousin," reported Claude. "Came up here with a message, and helped to spot some snipers. We've just returned, sir."

"And have done gallant business. Navy, eh?" smiled the officer. "Glad to see you, but—er—well—there are hot times coming. Perhaps you'd better be going."

Dereck was the very last fellow in the world to take such a broad hint, and, besides, he was filled with curiosity.

"Never have seen a big attack," he told his two cousins airily. "Of course, those affairs of ours with the Arabs were mere play, what? Now this—this might prove really exciting."

It was destined to prove a good deal more than exciting. It was destined, in fact, to prove as great a tussle between the Turks and the British as ever took place, for on this night the enemy were to push a huge attack as nearly home as reckless bravery and numbers would allow them. And the British, that still, thin line sparsely manning the lines of trenches, were to be tested even more sternly than they had already been tested. As for Dereck Smallweed—well, we shall hear more about him, for his presence in the British lines was to bring him into a position of the supremest danger.

CHAPTER XVI

Holding the Enemy

"PREPARE to receive the enemy. Hold your fire, boys. No wasting ammunition," sang out Hal, as he crouched with his own particular platoon in the trench now dug deep in the Gallipoli peninsula. "There's thousands of them, thousands of Turks, and our rifles won't make any impression on them at this distance. Leave 'em to the guns, and wait for the order."

There were hundreds of eager faces in that trench, hundreds of eager Australian and New Zealand eyes peering intently over the parapet into the gathering darkness, through which the enemy were easily observable. They could be seen clambering out of their distant trenches. They were marching down from the direction of Krithia village in battalions, in brigades, in masses—masses which had already attracted the eager gaze of the observers posted along the British lines. Guns were snapping from the extreme toe of the isthmus, somewhere behind the British line, and away to the right of the position held by the Australian and New Zealand contingent; for it must be remembered that not all the troops who had forced a landing upon Turkish soil were in touch with one another. The covering parties which had dashed for

those narrow beaches at the tip of Gallipoli were now working as one force, and already had the French troops on the right, numbering amongst them dusky Senegalese, Algerian soldiers, regulars from France, and others. But there was a big gap between this force—the main force, as one may term it—and the Colonials, who had forced a landing with such desperate gallantry at Gaba Tepe. They were not even in touch with one another, though, thanks to modern inventions, to the ease of signalling in these days, the work of both forces could be co-ordinated.

"But still we're separated," Claude observed, as Hal and Dereck joined him and entered into conversation for a few moments. "The fact is, we've surprised the Turks and their German leaders. Not actually fallen upon them when they were unaware of our coming; that's not what I mean, for we know well enough that they were perfectly ready. The storm of lead they sent hurtling about our ears proves it, if nothing else could. The surprise I refer to is the fact that here and at those other beaches our men made good and forced a landing. We've done the impossible, it seems, and for a moment we've made the Turk gasp. Now he's pulled himself together, and is going to make a desperate attempt to drive us out of his country."

"Which'll want just a bit of doing," the voluble and irrepressible Dereck told them, with that cocksureness which made him such a favourite. "But——"

"But what?" demanded Hal. "Jove! Look at those beggars. There must be thousands of Turks, and ain't our guns giving 'em pepper? Shrapnel's

bad enough in these trenches, where one has a certain amount of protection, but out in the open it's a hundred times worse. As to high-explosive shells, those ships' shells are a fair terror."

"That's just what I was coming to," observed Dereck, nettled at the interruption. "I was going to observe that the Navy'll have a hand in this business; she'll support you, don't you know. While the ships are behind you there'll be no driving you out of the country, what? Not that you fellows would be driven out without such support. Chaps who could force a landing as you did—I was there myself, remember, and know what sort of fire you faced—ain't going to be driven off in a hurry. Ha! Those are French guns—75's. Hear 'em! Snappy, eh? Giving the enemy beans, what? And—ah! there go the ships' guns. Better plug your ears with cotton-wool, or else you'll be deaf for a week to come."

There had been comparative peace on Gallipoli a little time before; though, to be sure, now and again the *Queen Elizabeth* put in a playful shot or two, when the British observing-aeroplanes wirelessed messages to her, playful shots in the shape of a ton or more of metal charged with terrific force. There were those Turkish snipers, too, men who loosed off their rifles at odd seconds, and, in spite of the damage they did, enlivened the monotony of trench life. In those times it had been possible to converse in ordinary tones, to sit and laugh and joke, even to sleep if one were minded, and did not happen to be an observer and on duty. But now a tornado of sound had been let loose over the country. It had

begun with a rattling, intermittent discharge of musketry which, toward the end of the peninsula where the main force was—some few miles away—had been added to by sudden outbursts of machine-gun fire. Then the firing had become more rapid, had got into a galloping stride, and seemed to have disturbed the whole of the combatants. For the British field-guns had joined in the chorus—bang-bang-bang-bang in quick succession, followed by other batteries coming into action. The French, too, had taken a hand in the affair, and the addition of the snappy reports of the 75's with which they were armed—a gun which has proved itself, perhaps, the very best of all used by any of the combatants—swelled the gathering noise till one would have thought it had reached its utmost limit.

But there was more to come, more thundering reports from behind the Turkish first-line positions, and, as Dereck had hinted with such pride, more from the ocean at the back of the British. There, battleships were steaming along the coast, and smoke was belching from their turrets and their 4-inch guns. Shells were screaming their way overhead, and particularly above the heads of the Colonials, for here there was hardly room for field-guns to come into action. Truly, the noise was awe-inspiring, terrible, shattering in its intensity. A weakling in those trenches would have collapsed from sheer fright at this appalling demonstration of the power of modern weapons. But there were only stout hearts in that Colonial division, only pluck and endurance amongst the British and French troops at

the toe of the peninsula. Also, there was a burning eagerness to be revenged, to treat the Turk and his German master to a dose of what they had borne only a few days ago. Those men and their dashing officers had gone through an ordeal than which there could be nothing more severe. They had conquered so far; and here was the time when they might repay the enemy in similar coin.

"Hold your fire," was the order which went along the Colonial trenches. "Let the guns get at 'em. Keep your cartridges till they're at point-blank range. Then walk into 'em square."

"And follow it up with a charge, eh?" gasped Dereck, infected with such excitement that he could hardly keep still. "Eu! That was nasty. Got the parapet of the trench, eh? Let's help. Those fellows are buried."

A high explosive sent by some Turkish gun had lobbed its ponderous way right on to the parapet of the trench some yards to their right, and had there exploded, sending a fountain of yellow earth toward the sky and obliterating the trench. But though one would have imagined it to have blotted out every one of the defenders, this was by no means the case, as Claude and his cousins discovered after hurrying to the scene of the explosion.

"Went so deep into the soil, which happens to be soft just here, that the force of the burst was taken by the earth," said the former. "Lend a hand here, men. There are some of our fellows under the earth, and they'll suffocate if we're not slippy. That's your sort. You can stand upright now, for there's no fear

of bullets, thanks to our having bagged those snipers. Here's a man's legs. Hooray! Pull him out. Why, it's Kangaroo Bill. Hello, Bill! How's everything?"

The gallant fellow shook himself like a dog, and gasped and spluttered as he spat out a mouthful of earth.

"Close call, sir," he told them, when at length he could speak. "Felt as if a ton of earth had got up on top of me. There's another fellow just under there. I felt him wriggling. Work for him, boys."

And work for him they did, with such energy that he was retrieved from beneath a pile of earth before a dozen more seconds had passed. By then he was blue, and seemed lifeless. However, the regimental surgeon was already on the spot, and within a few minutes he had revived the man, had treated him so effectually, indeed, that he was already protesting that he was fit for fighting. As to the trench, a dozen or more willing men wielded their spades to such purpose that it was reconstructed within five minutes, when it was at once manned by the men of the division. Meanwhile the Turks had been coming on towards the British positions, while the din of rifle-fire and guns, both small and big, had become even more deafening. A continuous roar came from the end of Gallipoli, while from the sea directly behind the Colonials there came the bellow of ships' guns and the shattering sounds of their explosions amongst the enemy.

"It's a counter-attack in force and with a vengeance," one of the officers told Dereck and his cousins as they peered over the parapet. "You can

see for yourselves that there are thousands of the enemy, and seeing that the British forces have divided, they've had to divide too. The lot we see most distinctly has the task of attacking us Colonials."

Even in the dusk the enemy could be seen forming up into masses, the particular formation favoured by Prussian military teachers, and therefore the formation adopted by the Turks, seeing that the Germans had them in the hollow of their hands, and long before this had become almost dictators in the country dominated by the Sultan. And once formed, those masses were bearing down from the slopes of Achi Baba, that veritable Spion Kop, which dominated this end of the isthmus. A portion—the greater number, in fact, were marching at a steady pace toward the toe of the isthmus, where the main British forces were entrenched. But a considerable proportion, many thousands in number, were heading direct for Gaba Tepe and the Colonial trenches.

A glance at this moment at the map of this particular part of the world will be useful, and will help to make clear what might otherwise be difficult of understanding. For it must be borne in mind that in forcing a landing upon this end of the peninsula of Gallipoli the Allies had a definite purpose. Their main object was to make it possible to send their ships of war, and with them their transports, carrying troops and food and munitions, up through the narrow channel of the Dardanelles. At the bottom of this idea was the determination to obtain access to their northern ally—to Russia—for only in the summer months is she accessible by sea to the

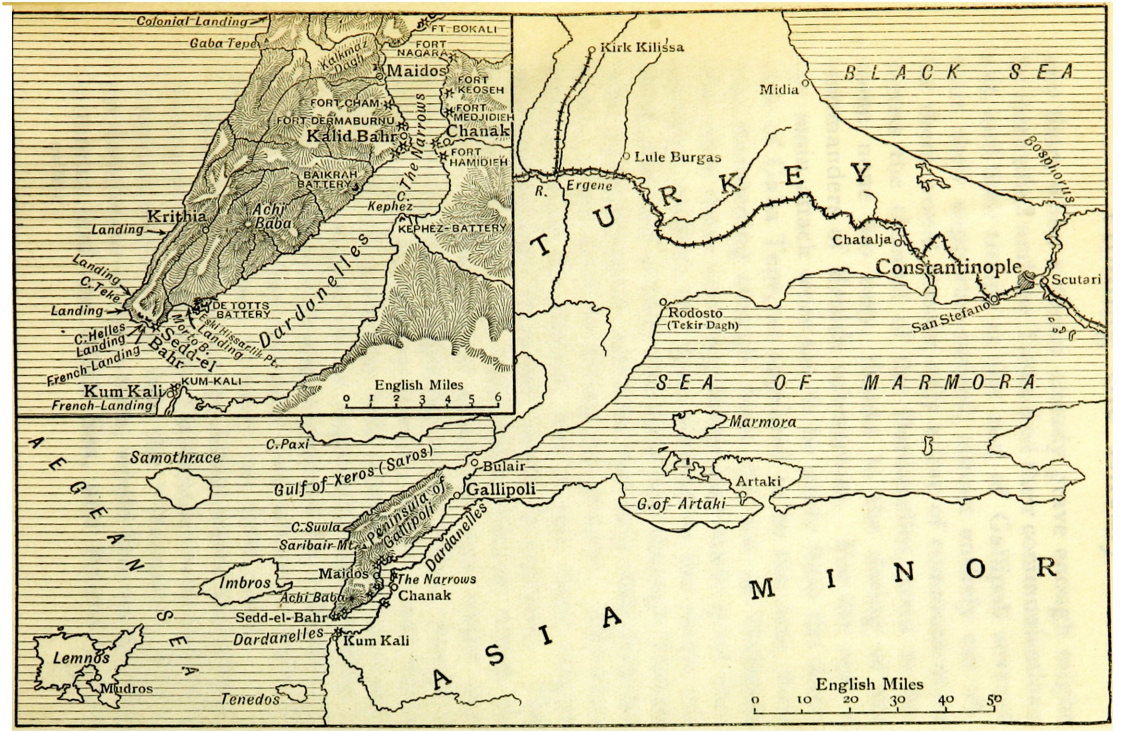
north. We may say, in fact, that at this moment Russia was besieged by Germany and Austria on her western frontier, and by the Turk along her southern or Caucasian frontier. To the north there was the sea, inhospitable and frozen solid during a great portion of the year, and therefore a barrier between her and France and England. To the south there was the Black Sea, open the year round, yet land-locked, with but one narrow outlet to the Mediterranean, and that through the Dardanelles channel, bordered on one side by this long, naked outcrop of land known as the Gallipoli peninsula, and on the other by the Asiatic shore.

Across that outlet sat Turkey, one foot on the European shore — on Gallipoli, in fact — and the other in Asia. For years she had been there. For years she had obstructed Russia's free access to the Mediterranean; and at any period during those many years that a Sultan had reigned in Turkey, that nation had been capable of closing the Dardanelles door to any comer, whether he sailed from the direction of the Black Sea, or whether he came from the Mediterranean. Think of the annoyance such a condition of affairs must have been to mighty Russia — how it must have limited her commercial activities to be ever at the mercy of Turkey as regards that single warm-water outlet. Then recollect that, once she had attempted to break down this fatal barrier, the Crimean War had resulted, and Russia's hopes had been shattered.

In those fatal days Britain was on the side of Turkey, with whom France was also allied. But

time and circumstance change many things, and here France and Britain found themselves, allies once more, fighting to break open this immensely powerful barrier. As we have already said, the channel of the Dardanelles is narrow and deep and tortuous, and there swirls through it from the miniature Sea of Marmora a current which adds to the difficulties of an attack. But, more than all else, there is a portion called the "Narrows", where the rocky and precipitous walls of the channel approach one another closer than in any other part, and where are located a succession of forts always strong, and now made far more formidable, thanks to German mastery of the craft of warfare, and thanks also to the guns and munitions they had been pouring into Turkey.

Look then at the map once more, and see how Gaba Tepe, the beach where the gallant Colonials had forced a landing, is opposite a narrowing of Gallipoli, and on a line with Maidos, a Turkish town situated toward the upper end of the "Narrows". From such a base, troops threatened the communications of Turkish soldiers operating against British or Allied forces who had forced a landing at the end of Gallipoli; while at any time a big enough force, suitably supported by guns, might by heavy fighting win its way across the few miles of ground which intervened between Gaba Tepe and the "Narrows", and render the further occupation of the forts impossible. Such was the situation of the Colonials, a thorn already thrust deep into the Turkish side, though the force had barely done more than secure a landing. But they had been reinforced already. More troops might join them at



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MAP OF THE WATERWAY DIVIDING THE TURKISH EMPIRE

The inset of the Dardanelles explains how the Allied troops were landed on the Gallipoli peninsula. The difficulties of forcing a passage through the Straits may easily be imagined, bearing in mind the numerous forts that line the banks, and the short distance from one side to the other.

any time, when a threat already grave enough might be intensified and the Turks find their communications cut, and their troops at the end of Gallipoli severed from their supports—indeed, almost entirely cut off, for there would remain only a line of communication across the channel of the Dardanelles, soon to become none too easy, thanks to the daring of the commanders of British submarines. For the rest, if the main attack were not to be made from the direction of Gaba Tepe, as appeared to be the case, there was threatening enough from the toe of Gallipoli. For once those covering forces had made good their landing, soldiers had been hurried to the shore, soldiers who had already cut their way through Turkish wire entanglements, and who had dug their trenches deep. They must be driven out at once. The whole country must be cleared, for, if not, those heights dominating the "Narrows" might be captured. That elevation known as Achi Baba, behind which the Turkish reinforcements sheltered, and where their guns were placed, might fall to the Allies; though its natural difficulties were terrible, while it was honeycombed in all directions with trenches and gun positions, and seemed to be absolutely impregnable, so perfectly had the Germans planned the defences, and so completely had the time and labour at their disposal allowed them to carry out their plans.

After that, supposing the Allied forces already hammering at the doors of the Dardanelles to be successful, Constantinople would fall, the "Narrows", freed of the dominance of those forts, would link up the Mediterranean and the Black Sea, and Russia and her

Allies would be hand-in-hand, able to afford one another mutual help and protection; able, the one to feed her comrades with grain, while they poured munitions of war into her ports and equipped those hundreds of thousands of the Tsar's subjects, only too willing to fight for their country and for the cause, yet debarred at this moment because of a fatal lack of arms and equipment.

"Hard at it already, down at the end of the ground," Dereck shouted in Claude's ear. "When are our chaps going to loose off at those Turks? Ain't they a fine target, too? No one could miss 'em. Surely——"

"Orders are orders," the impassive Claude answered, though his staring eyes and the manner in which he gripped his rifle showed how hard he, too, found it to restrain his impatience. Indeed, all along the Colonial trenches men were, as it were, straining at the leash, fretting at this inactivity, watching with eagerness, with furious joy almost, that vast phalanx of men marching down upon them. But orders were orders, as Claude had reminded his cousin.

"Steady!" he said. "The time's coming. And meanwhile, ain't those gunners walking into 'em?"

From behind them, from those ships slowly steaming through the water, there came the thunderous reports of big guns, the bursting of the projectiles they fired drowning the bark of the Turkish pieces still flinging shell over the heads of their advancing men against the Colonial trenches. There was a continuous rattle, too, of smaller guns—4-inch guns—which, breaking into rapid fire, deluged the side of the region beyond Claude and his friends, sought

out hidden spots likely to shelter enemy guns, and plumped shrapnel and common shell right over the advancing Turkish masses.

It was terrific while it lasted, though the gathering gloom made all the details indistinguishable. Yet there was sufficient light to show where huge gaping chasms were torn in that mass of living flesh and blood, to show men thrusting forward to fill those hideous gaps, to display long, lacerated lanes swept through the Turkish ranks, and swaths of dead and mangled soldiers littering the ground already passed over by the enemy. It was war; in fact, it was what these gallant Colonials had faced and won their way through so gallantly. It was precisely what those British troops at the toe of Gallipoli had endured when making their landing. And now the position was reversed.

"At three hundred yards. Look out for the whistle. Then open fire, rapid fire," someone shouted along the trench, his voice almost completely smothered by the din and turmoil.

"Three hundred yards. Fire, rapid. Get ready."

Men passed the order on along the trench. Fingers gripped rifles the harder, while heads were elevated the better to observe the enemy.

Ah! The whistle went. Its shrill shriek was borne away in an instant by a mighty gust from a Turkish shell bursting in front of the parapet. Still, the nearest subaltern heard it, and seizing his own whistle repeated the signal. A shot was fired away at the left extremity of the position. A second report sounded from another point some yards along, and

was followed by others at different points. Then a spluttering volley burst from the rifles of the Colonials, a spluttering, hesitating volley which broke almost at once into a torrent of rifle-fire, into a perfect storm of musketry reports. Dereck, already leaning on the parapet and half out of the trench, watched the result of that fire and gasped. He had seen men fall to Turkish fire. He had seen those gallant Australians and New Zealanders tumble as they forced a landing, had seen them half in and half out of the water, helpless and drowning. He had watched them pitch on to their faces as they crossed that narrow beach below, and had discerned their figures rolling from the side of the steep cliff which they had essayed to climb. But this was different. The Turkish soldiers were suffering now, Turkish soldiers whose comrades marched on; who, now that they were within striking distance, broke into a run, and came charging in their thousands down upon the Colonial defenders of those trenches. Yes, there were thousands of the enemy, masses vastly outnumbering the British clinging to that precarious position at Gaba Tepe; masses of frenzied men who, in spite of that shattering rain of shells, in spite of the storm of bullets spreading death and destruction throughout their closely-packed ranks, came on even faster, came on with incredible bravery, with a courage and an élan which matched that shown by these gallant Colonials themselves when making their daring descent upon the coast of Gallipoli. By now, too, they were so close that Dereck could see their faces; not clearly, let us add, since the

gloom was increasing; but clearly enough to tell him of the agony they were suffering, of the ferocity which filled them, of the determination of this multitude of Turks.

"Keep on firing. Don't stop for a moment. And when you get the order to charge, go for 'em, boys."

The shout came ringing down the trenches, launched through a megaphone which one of the officers had thoughtfully brought with him.

"Ammunition! More ammunition there."

Men blazed away till their rifles were so heated that they could scarce hold them, and until their stock of cartridges was exhausted. But there were comrades near at hand to supply their wants; while behind them, toiling up those steep and rough approaches—for as yet the engineers had not completed the roads they were even then busily constructing—were other Colonials, sweating with the heat and their furious energy, bearing boxes of ammunition to the trenches.

"A chap can hear himself speak now," Dereck shouted to Hal, who had taken up his post close beside his sailor cousin. "How are we doing?"

"Fine!" Hal bellowed back at him. "Fine! We'll have 'em stopped altogether soon, and——"

He lowered his voice of a sudden, realizing that there was no longer need to shout. Indeed, for some few minutes past there had been no need, for the ships' guns had ceased to thunder at the enemy. The support they had given to the Colonials was necessarily removed, seeing that to drop shells amongst the Turks when so close to the British trenches might have injured their own comrades.

"And now we've got 'em all to ourselves," Hal called to Dereck. "Got 'em well in hand, too. Look out for another order."

It came almost before he had done speaking, came when the enemy were within twenty yards of the line of trenches—a ragged mass of men, yet still a mass; a host of soldiers whose charge had already broken down, thanks to the steady and rapid fire of the defenders, but who yet held their ground, some still endeavouring to advance across those fatal twenty yards, while others staggered, gripped at comrades to support them, or raved and howled curses and threats at these gallant and invincible Australians and New Zealanders.

"Fix bay'nets. Men, out of the trenches and at 'em! Hooray, boys! Let's show everyone how Colonials can do the thing. Into the middle of 'em!"

No need to give that order to fix bayonets. No need even to call to the men to clamber out of their trenches. For the Colonials were already there. Men and officers, those brave souls who in their rush for the beach at Gaba Tepe had shown such reckless dash that they had become almost uncontrollable, were not likely to be skulking in the depths of their trenches when there was more work, desperate work before them. They were already in position for a forward move, and as that order was shouted at them through the megaphone they sent up a bellowing cheer, poured a last volley into the staggering enemy, and launched themselves as one man at the front lines of the Turks.

Dereck was there, Claude and Hal too, and beside

them Kangaroo Bill and a host of his comrades. Bayonet struck with metallic ring against enemy bayonet, men singled out their own particular Turks or even a group of enemies, while, now that that last volley had been sent into the wavering enemy, scarce a trigger was pulled. It was hand-to-hand fighting, hand-to-hand fighting which discovered men locked with Turkish infantrymen, stabbing at them with their bayonets, dashing into their midst with swinging rifle-butts, and in some cases even attacking them with their fists.

That ragged, shaken Turkish front line met the Colonials bravely for one brief minute and then fell back, those of them who were still alive. Behind them the mass of the enemy pushed forward to meet these terrible British fighters. But only a pace or two did they cover, for the Colonials themselves were advancing, not at walking speed, but at a furious pace, in a mad, invincible charge which took them right into the midst of the enemy. A few seconds saw them broken up into struggling groups, and then saw the whole mass of the Turkish soldiers fleeing for their lives.

"Back into the trenches, boys," came the order. "Fill your magazines again. There are more of 'em coming up to support the others, and they're reforming."

"There go the ships' guns again," gasped Dereck, now back in the trench with his cousins. "George! What a business! And—and look at the results. Look at the work we've done."

He flung the perspiration streaming from his fore-

head with one earth-soiled hand, and peered into the darkness. To his immediate front, to the right and the left, indeed along the whole length of the Colonial trenches, figures lay thick upon the ground, Turkish soldiers who had fallen, in heaps here and there, in batches of three and four where the attacking lines had met. There were Turkish officers amongst them, and a German officer now and again, while mixed up with them were not a few of the Colonials. And farther afield, seen under the glare of a search-light playing upon the scene from one of the battleships, were other figures, figures which littered the whole of the ground from that point, some three hundred yards away, where the fire of the British had first opened upon the charging enemy. Beyond there were still more, men who had fallen to the guns of the fleet, dead and wounded now hidden from sight even in spite of that glaring search-light, because more masses of Turkish infantry were advancing over them.

"Hold your fire. Hang on till they're closer this time. Then go for 'em again as you did before."

"And through 'em and on," bellowed Claude, his stolidity gone, his accustomed calmness lost in the heat of this terrible conflict. "Let's push on, boys. More elbow-room is wanted here, and here's the chance to seize it."

The thunder of ships' guns almost drowned his voice, while search-lights lit up the ground for a couple of miles in front of the Colonial trenches and showed a host of enemies advancing at a run. If anything, now that their supports had joined them,

there were bigger masses of Turks, masses which looked as if they must overwhelm that gallant band of Colonials. Yet not a man flinched. Instead, these fine fellows from Australia and New Zealand, volunteers every one, men to whom the call to duty had sounded even at that great distance, cheered and cheered again. They gripped their rifles and, lying half in and half out of their trenches, waited eagerly for the word to fire. Not one pulled a trigger, though the temptation to do so was so great. Not one even ducked as Turkish shells plumped in and near their positions and sent fountains of earth spreading all over them. The taste of fighting these gallant fellows had already been given had steeled their nerves, had shown them the value of patience, had shown them the wisdom of their officers. They waited then, grimly, in silence now, watching that staggering mass illuminated by the search-lights, watching as its front edge was frayed and bitten away by shell-fire, and noting those terrible gaps which the high-explosive shells sent by the ships behind them tore in their crowded ranks. And at length the moment came.

"Point-blank range. Hundred yards. Let into 'em, Colonials."

Once more the fusillade commenced in desultory fashion, for the thunder of the guns prevented the order reaching every ear. Then it swelled into a veritable torrent, while the shattering report of the ships' guns ceased altogether. And on this occasion that hurricane of musketry lasted for a shorter space of time than it had done before. There were yells

of joy from the trenches when one of the senior officers stood silhouetted in the open, clearly distinguishable by all as the search-light played upon his gallant figure. Men sprang out of their trenches. A roar of cheering went down the line, and then the Colonials charged as they had never charged before.

"Halt! Cease fire! Retire to your trenches."

An officer had suddenly appeared before the troops with whom Dereck and his cousins had been fighting, and flinging his arms wide and waving frantically, ordered them to retreat.

"Halt! Go back now!" shouted Dereck incredulously, for their charge had carried them at once right into the centre of the enemy, and had resulted in the Turks turning tail and fleeing. "Now, when an advance will gain ground for us? Why——"

"Impossible! What's it mean? Cease fire, eh? There's something wrong," Claude bellowed indignantly.

"And—and who's the officer? Hold your ground, men," shouted Hal.

"Now, sir, who are you, and who authorizes you to give such an order?"

Dereck darted a pace or two forward and fixed his eyes on the officer who had given that strange command. He was a short, stumpy, fat man, dressed in the uniform of a Colonial officer, his slouch hat well down over his eyes and his face toward the enemy. But the search-light playing upon him showed every other detail but his face with a distinctness which was wonderful. He waved his arms again, and once more shouted the order to cease fire.

Then, as if wondering whether his orders had been obeyed, he faced round for a moment to look at the men behind him.

"Who is he? I've seen him before," shouted Claude.

"And I too. Hold on, men," bellowed Hal. "Let's ask who he is. Be ready for an instant advance."

"It's that German beast," bellowed Dereck frantically. "Don't you recognize him? A spy! A spy! He's checking our men in the very midst of the action."

Headlong, without a thought of the consequences, Dereck plunged toward that man who had so suddenly put an end to the onward rush of the Colonials. Claude shouted at him to halt. Hal followed him for a while, and then, remembering his own command, retraced his steps reluctantly. They saw that figure which had stood so prominently before them start as Dereck shouted. They watched him now as he took to his heels and raced after the retreating Turks. And for a while they were able to follow the figure of that gallant middy, of Dereck Smallweed. Then, of a sudden, the search-light was deflected, and Dereck and the renegade, the traitor Otto Scholz, were lost to sight; nor was there a sign of them when those Colonials advanced again, this time over ground positively crowded with Turkish corpses, and, selecting a line, consolidated their new positions. Dereck was lost. Like Alphonse Albone, he had disappeared within the lines held by the enemy.

CHAPTER XVII

A Spy in their Midst

"AND to think that there should be German spies out here, playing the same old officer trick our fellows have had to put up with in France!" gasped Hal, when at length he and Claude had a moment to themselves—when, in fact, their new trenches were well on the way to completion, and the night, that eventful night when they, like their comrades at the toe of the Gallipoli peninsula, had shattered the Turkish counter-attacks, was well advanced toward morning. "Here, sit down for a breather, Claude."

"And a smoke," his cousin grunted. "Pipe of baccy will taste good just now after that hard labour. Yes, and to think that the spy should have proved to be that scoundrel!"

"Otto Scholz! That greasy beggar, that brute!"

"Thought we'd shaken him off for good in the desert," grumbled Claude, when at length his pipe was drawing to his entire satisfaction. "One hoped that he'd been blown to pieces by the last shell the destroyer fired when she came to our rescue, though a fellow doesn't like wishing that sort of thing, particularly when there are so many shells flying around."

He poked his head up over the parapet of their

new trench and looked about him. Then he nodded through the gloom significantly at his cousin.

Hal grimaced, and, like Claude, listened for a while. There was still the rattle of rifle-fire from points along the Colonial line, while every now and again one of the ships lying off the shore pitched a shell on to the slopes of Achi Baba. In the semi-darkness that now covered the land, those shells were a species of fireworks which vastly entertained those who had the time and the leisure to watch them; for huge flashes of yellowish-green flame suddenly burst into being where the shells dropped, while on occasion the terrific explosions which resulted in those bursts of flame could be felt by those in the trenches. It was different, however, and far less entertaining with the shells fired by those Turkish batteries hidden somewhere in the neighbourhood of Krithia village, or on the slopes of the eminence lying between the British troops and the "Narrows". For at the toe of the peninsula, and on the plateau adjacent to Gaba Tepe, there was little enough room for our gallant fellows, with none to spare, and no means of retiring. Nor was it possible to withdraw from gun-fire, unless the troops were bodily taken from Gallipoli, a suggestion which would have been indignantly scouted by every man there. Instead, a desultory rain of shells had to be faced, shells which dropped into the British front lines, into the support trenches and communication trenches, into the approaches to the latter, on to any one or all of the beaches which had been conquered, and even into the sea behind, and well among the transports and the battleships cruising there.

"No. It ain't all honey; and with those bothering things lobbing on to the parapets or into the trenches, and bursting in fine style, well, a fellow doesn't go out of his way to wish a man—even a traitor and a scoundrel like this German—to be blown to pieces."

"Exactly," observed Hal dryly, after a long pause, for an enemy projectile had pointed the force of Claude's remarks by thudding into the trench they were occupying, just beyond the nearest traverse. There, however, though they waited impatiently for the burst, it failed to explode, and was presently dug out by a sweating Australian, who thereupon began to tax his wits as to what he was to do with this interesting souvenir, and how, eventually, he was to pack it and dispatch it to the folks "down under".

"Exactly," Hal repeated. "But—well—with a fellow like that Otto Scholz, one can't help wishing he may be caught somehow. And as we were saying, just fancy having German spies out here. It beats me hollow."

"And it'll be a warning. I've reported the incident," said Claude, "and, of course, all the officers and men will be informed. Wonder what's happened to Dereck? Wish to goodness I had collared him just at the moment when that scoundrel yelled his orders to us."

They lapsed into silence, smoking their pipes in the abstracted way common to men who are troubled. For this was a great trouble. The loss of the jovial middy, their cousin, was a grief to both these gallant Colonial officers, while it was a disagreeable surprise both to them and to their comrades to learn that spies

were amongst them. For, of course, if there was one, there would be more. Germans had proved themselves in other fields adepts at spying.

As for the gallant middy, the last we saw of him when under that search-light was his heels as he dashed toward the renegade who had endeavoured to check the rush of the Colonials.

"Halt!" he bellowed, getting within a half-dozen yards of Otto Scholz. "Stop at once or I'll——"

Out came his revolver, while his finger went to the trigger. And then that troublesome search-light switched off the figure of the German.

"Confound the man aboard that ship, whichever she is," growled the middy. "Why's he want to switch off just at this moment? Hi! Stop, I tell you."

Something swished through the air and caused Dereck to start backward. It wasn't a bullet. Far different, indeed; and the gallant Mr. Midshipman Smallweed was something of an expert now, for many hundreds of bullets had passed him by of late and missed him. It wasn't a shell either. The "wind" of that object which had swished so near to his head was as nothing to the "wind" produced by a shell. Yes, Dereck was sure of that. Then what was it? In the darkness there was no saying, but——

"There it is again. Someone slogging at me with a rifle-butt, eh? Well then—— Hang that fellow with the search-light!"

The sailor dodged swiftly to one side and crouched near to the ground. And then, just for one fleeting moment, as it swept across the position laden with Turkish soldiers but a few minutes earlier, packed

with their staggering masses, and now loaded with their dead and wounded, the search-light lit up Dereck's immediate surroundings, his own crouching figure, and the short, stumpy figure of the German, of Otto Scholz, just half a dozen yards away. And what a sight this German presented! The scoundrel's slouch hat had flown from his head during his hasty departure, and now he stood bareheaded, his brows drawn down and scowling, his eyes protruding, and his squat body bent backward as he swung a rifle over his shoulder.

Dereck lifted his revolver. "Halt!" he shouted, and at that instant the search-light travelled on and left the ground about him in utter darkness — in Stygian darkness, indeed — made more intense by contrast with the dazzling flare which had made it lighter than day but a moment before.

Thud! Something struck the ground almost at Dereck's feet. He heard a grunting breath drawn within a pace of him, and then a German oath.

"Bah! You will follow then," he heard Otto Scholz growling through those bared teeth. "You whom I never expected to meet again will recognize me, eh? You will spoil the game I am playing, the game which I shall play again. Then take——"

Like a shot from a cannon the middy threw himself against the German. It was so dark that he could not see even the merest outline of this renegade. But Dereck had fingers which allowed him to feel his way, fingers which caught the German by the shoulder at first, and then shifted like a flash to his neck, and gripped there as a bulldog grips, till the spy he had

seized gurgled and choked and staggered backward. They fell to the ground, Dereck above his opponent, and still Otto Scholz gurgled and choked and struggled desperately to shake off that grip. They rolled over and over, Dereck sticking like a leech to his man, his legs entangled in his, and his fingers still encircling the broad neck of the German. Then there was an interruption. Someone found the two figures struggling on the ground, and was joined by two others. The three seemed at once to divine what was happening, for they tore Dereck's grip away from Otto's neck, releasing the scoundrel just in time. Then one of them supported his swaying figure, while the other two hastily discussed the situation.

"One of the enemy, eh? The man we saw following this comrade of ours, this German hero. Shoot him! Give me a rifle. Quick! That search-light may swing round this way again, and then a volley will be poured into us. Quick, I say! Better shoot one of these Englishmen than have more of our own side hurt."

Dereck heard the man's words and guessed at their meaning.

"Brutes! Going to shoot me in cold blood, eh?" he gasped, for he was panting after that struggle. "Well, I'll have something to say."

He heard a lock click, and summoning all his strength threw off the grip of the two men who were holding him. Then quick as a flash he sprang to one side and crouched close to the ground, endeavouring to still his deep, tell-tale breathing. But if he were successful or moderately so in that effort, he was yet

not to escape from these Turks who had come so unexpectedly to Otto Scholz's aid; for once more that search-light swung across the battle-ground in front of the Colonial trenches, swung across at great speed, the huge, luminous eye aboard that ship steaming slowly off the coast of Gallipoli peering inquisitively into every corner and cranny, throwing into strong silhouette the masses of scrub and the few trees which here dotted the ground, and showing up with ghastly distinctness the heaps of dead and writhing Turkish wounded who lay in all directions. It picked out the figures of those three Turks, and of the German spy one of them was supporting, and as they seemed to be bearers succouring a wounded man, and therefore engaged upon an errand of mercy, it swept on, illuminating yet more dead and wounded, piles of them, whole swaths, some near the Colonial trenches, some behind their present line, and others, numbers of others, hideous rows still farther off in the direction of Krithia.

A loud grunt escaped one of the Turks. He saw Dereck and made a dash for him, while the middy, with a groan and an exclamation of annoyance at the unfortunate return of that search-light, endeavoured to avoid him.

"Ah! So you wished to escape us, and with good reason. Hold! I will strangle you with these ten fingers if you struggle longer. Now, comrade, the rifle, and but one shot. Place the muzzle close to his head, and pull the trigger. But first make sure that I am not in the line of flight of the bullet."

The man, a huge fellow, had Dereck in his grip in

an instant, while the other, seizing a rifle which he had found at his feet lying across the body of a Turkish comrade, approached the two and made ready to carry out the murder. In a minute or less Dereck would have ended his days, had it not been for the spy whom he had followed.

"Hold!" he spluttered, the word coming from his throat in a long, half-smothered gurgle. "Don't shoot. The prisoner will be valuable. He is of the Navy, and there is need of naval news. Stop, I say. Ah! The ruffian has wellnigh cracked my throat. I can scarce speak. Give me water."

They groped amongst the living and the half-dead, and secured a water-bottle from one of the unfortunate fellows. Then, while Otto Scholz sat and whimpered and gurgled at the pain he was suffering, they poured water down his throat, managing to give him such an ample supply, in fact, that he was half-drowned and spluttered loudly.

"Bah! Would you kill me in that way, with water?" he growled angrily, letting his temper have full sway now that he was feeling better. "Where is this dog, and how comes it that you allowed him to throw himself upon me?"

"But—allowed!—we were behind you. We did not see you advance with the enemy," one of the men answered apologetically, in that liquid, soft voice possessed by the Turks. "You—we—we saw you come from the British trenches. You called to them to cease fire and retire, for of a truth the dogs had dealt hardly with us. Then you were challenged, and perforce had to run to join us. After that the

search-light went astray, for which many of us were thankful, and—and you were lost."

"Lost! I—you—lost!" shouted Otto, his voice recovering all the while and his anger rising in proportion. Indeed, never a very pleasant-tempered individual, the severe handling which Dereck had given this renegade had shaken his nerve, and made him even less capable of controlling himself than on ordinary occasions. Not that Otto Scholz ever attempted much in the direction of self-control. If there happened to be a piece of rascality to be attempted, Otto was quite ready, without a thought of the right or wrong of the thing, but certainly with an eye wide open to the possible consequences. For personal gain he was ever ready. For personal danger he was none too eager. Yet—and here was something strange in the character of this spy and traitor—if the task in hand was one likely to serve his own people—his own German people, let us add, for, though naturalized, Otto was a German of the Germans, and his naturalization was but a ruse to throw dust in the trusting eyes of the British—then Otto was prepared to encounter danger, had encountered danger, in fact, and would risk his life again when the time came. For, after all, the spy who ventures as he had done into the trenches of the enemy, who lies there while the bullets of his own side sweep overhead, and who faces with the enemy a counter-attack on the part of his own side—that man runs the risk of being killed just as soon and just as thoroughly as do those enemies with whom he has taken up position.

"Bah! It is not pleasant, I know," he had told himself, and had repeated to a senior German officer, the very one to whom he was responsible and from whom he took his orders. "This being fired at by our own side has its dangers and its vexations. But elsewhere there is little danger. I am unknown to these Colonials. I speak English as well as any one of them, and I who have been with soldiers know their words of command as well as they know them themselves."

Yet he had been discovered. By a curious stroke of ill-fortune there had been amongst those Colonials three young men who had met him before—three cousins who were friends of Alphonse Albone. It was worse fortune still to have made his attempt to hold up the advance of the Colonials just in front of these three officers, and much worse to have found himself in the grip of one of them.

"Ugh! The young fool's talons have sunk deep into my throat," he gasped, for every now and again a paroxysm of his throat made breathing difficult. "I would shoot him out of hand, here, out in front of his own people; only he might be useful to me, to us, and—and one can always finish him off. Ah! So you could not see me, could not rescue me earlier," he growled at the three Turks who had returned to his rescue, who as a matter of fact had saved his life. "You, who were told off to watch for me, who were given the exact position, you and the dozen or more beside you specially attached to my person failed. Why? Why? I ask. And where are the others?"

That search-light was sweeping back across the battle-ground, stealing across the expanse of rising land which stretched from the Colonial position upwards to Krithia and beyond to the heights of Achi Baba, those heights which frowned down upon the British forces. Dereck watched it desperately, feeling queer and shaken after his encounter, and expecting to be killed at any moment. Otto Scholz watched it also, and the three Turks too—watched it as it fell upon the heaps of slain comrades, the men who had sworn that very day that they would drive the enemy from Gallipoli. And as they watched, those three Turks looked askance through the darkness at this little German, this terrible little man to whom they and their fellows had been posted as an escort.

"Of a truth, it is strange to be blamed for not effecting an earlier rescue," one of them was muttering to himself; "strange when, but for us, this German would have been killed by the sailor officer. And now he asks us where we were, and how it happened that we were not upon the spot earlier. Listen, Excellency," he said, his voice little above a whisper, for he was fearful that his words might be heard and attract the fire of the British; "listen. We were told off as an escort, it is true, and together with our comrades marched down to the spot selected, where, if the attack failed, we were to look out for you; and if it succeeded we were to join you in the position of the enemy. But—bear with me a moment—their fire, the enemy's fire was terrific. It swept us off our legs. It slew us in hundreds. See them as they lie beneath the search-light. It slew men here

and there and everywhere. It slew also those others of us told off to watch for your Excellency. Thus it happens that there are but three of us—three who were carried away by our retreating and still-living comrades."

"Silence! Down quick!" shouted Otto, seeing the light sweeping nearer. "Pigs, can you not see that you will draw fire?"

"And hold the prisoner close," growled one of the men. "If he sat up or waved an arm the light might halt over us, and then those comrades of his would come this way to the rescue."

There was abject fear in his voice, a pleading note in fact. For truly the Colonials and their comrades at the toe end of Gallipoli had dealt harshly with the Turkish masses who had advanced against them that night. If there had been a doubt about the statement, the gleaming eye of the search-light was there to prove its truth, its terrible truth. Not one of these three told off to guard the treacherous Otto was ever likely to forget that dreadful experience, the awful effect of those shells tossed amongst them as they advanced in the distance, the shrapnel which dodged their every movement, which caught them as they assembled, which followed them as they moved forward, which hammered harder and harder into their midst as the distance between themselves and the British lessened. Yes, it had been a terrible ordeal, though not a whit worse than the ordeal faced by the British forces when effecting a landing. The only difference had been that the Turks then were masters of the situation, with trenches ready dug, with gun positions formed

and sheltered. That difference, and one other which told against them. The British needed not to be herded shoulder to shoulder, to feel the close contact of a fellow soldier. There was something essentially different about their method of attack and of advance, something essentially British, which carried them on in open order, each man filled to the brim with daring and with self-confidence, each man capable of commanding himself if there were none near at hand to give an order.

Ah! The light was directly over them, playing upon their figures, worming its penetrating rays between their legs, under their arms, through every crevice.

"Dog of an infidel, move and I slay you," growled the man who lay at Dereck's side. "Move but a finger, and this rifle shall blow a hole through your head that will blot you out of existence. Excellency, see, this dog looks stubborn and as if he would fight more. Give me leave to shoot him, and so make an end of the danger."

"Peace! Who are you to talk of danger? Have you forgotten that I nearly died at his hands?" Otto shouted at them, his voice carrying across the ground so clearly that British observers stared from their trenches and, catching a movement on the part of one of the three Turks as the light swept across the group, sent a few shots hustling in their direction. "Ah! A miss. The bullets struck the bodies of those who lie near us," chuckled Otto, "and now the light has gone on. Pick me up, one of you fools. We will talk later on of your neglect of duty. But of the others you have said nothing."

"They are dead. Mayhap it is into their bodies that the bullets just fired have flown. The Excellency has forgotten that I told him that we are the sole survivors," answered one of the men, his voice faltering; for if the Turkish troops were afraid of their own officers, they went in mortal terror of the German. In some way or other, by some means which these humble Turkish could not fathom, men from Germany had usurped the powers hitherto held by officers of the Sultan. They filled every post of importance. They led the Turkish divisions. They were posted alongside of Turkish officers wherever and whenever there were actions of any consequence. And worse than all for the humble, uneducated Turkish soldier and conscript, the German had brought into the Turkish army his own ideas and methods when dealing with the mass or with the individual. Their discipline was of the strictest, their orders short and sharp, and of an arrogance hitherto undreamed of. And if need be, violence was added. If need be they drove the Sultan's troops, and, marching behind them in these massed attacks, were ready to shoot down ruthlessly all those who showed the smallest hesitation. They brought to bear, in fact, that frightfulness which, in the west, has caused them to turn their own guns on masses of their own men who were in a tight corner and were prepared to surrender. To the Turk their methods were incomprehensible and hateful. Yet resistance meant death, and being the stoic and fatalist he is, the Turkish soldier grumbled and suffered, apologized if he could, and became more humble than he would be with his own officers.

"See," cried the man, "the light has swept on, and the enemy no longer fire. Mayhap they have killed some of our wounded."

"Mayhap they will kill you too," growled Otto. "Come! Pick me up, I ordered, and bring that cub along. Only, as you value your own skins, see that no harm comes to him. Do not let me hear, when we reach the camp, that an enemy bullet has struck him; for then I shall know what has happened, and there will be other bullets to spare for those who should have guarded him. Now, forward. Ah! Wait. That grip is still on my throat."

A paroxysm caught him, and for a while Otto Scholz spluttered and coughed till he was purple in the face. Then he slowly recovered, and, growling out an order, was led on toward the Turkish position, Dereck being dragged at his heels by the two who had constituted themselves his guardians. Stumbling over dead men, stumbling over groups of them mingled closely together, their twisted limbs sprawled in every direction, and on many an occasion finding their own legs entangled amongst the Turkish wounded, Otto Scholz and his escort conveyed their prisoner in the direction of Krithia. Once they were delayed, for some unhappy wretch, hearing their approach and believing them to be an ambulance party, snatched eagerly at the nearest of them for help, and seized the German by the leg, causing the spy to give a shrill call of terror.

"What—who is that?" he demanded fiercely, for the man's grip on his leg had startled him considerably. "Speak at once."

"A wounded man, a sore wounded man," a feeble voice answered. "Who are you? Of the ambulance service? Then is Allah kind, for I have need of assistance."

"Let go—do you hear!" shouted Otto, spluttering with rage, partly because of the man's grip which delayed him, and partly because of the fright which he had experienced. "What! You will not release your hold! I tell you, we are not of the ambulance service."

"But—but, Excellency, you can help a wounded man, and I have need of your help. For pity's sake lend me aid, give me water, or—or if you can do neither, then shoot me, put me out of my pain and misery."

Little did the poor fellow know to what manner of man he was appealing, nor how little that man cared for the pains and penalties suffered by his fellows. Otto Scholz would do all and more for the Fatherland, for Germany; would spy against and cheat the nation to which he had sworn allegiance, would willingly work for the downfall of Great Britain; but after that he was essentially selfish. Why should he help, then, this one amongst so many thousands of wounded Turks? And, after all, who were the Turks, and of what value to him or to Germany?

"Pigs, all of them. A people we shall govern when they have helped us to conquer," he growled. "Let go. What! You will not? Then——"

He kicked the unhappy fellow brutally, sending him flat amongst the dead and wounded, where he lay groaning miserably. Then, with a growl of anger

and a hoarse command to his escort, the spy once more continued his journey.

"Bring the prisoner in here," he commanded, when at length the village had been reached, coming to a sudden halt outside a low doorway. "Knock there so that they may be warned, for otherwise we might be shot by our own side. Ha! There is a cheerful light. Help me down the steps, and follow with the prisoner."

Dereck heard one of the escort thump loudly on a door, and then saw a widening stream of light issuing from a point below the level of his feet. The stream widened rapidly, and soon he was looking down a rough flight of steps into a square and low doorway which seemed to have been built into the earth itself. Beyond this now opened door there were more steps, while at the bottom of them stood a man, a Turkish officer, smoking a cigarette and holding an oil lamp in one hand. The other gripped a stout cord with which he had operated the latch of the door and pulled it open.

"Well?" he demanded curtly in Turkish.

"The General is within, eh?" asked Otto, employing as much arrogance as any German officer could boast of.

"He is. Who asks?"

"Otto Scholz, the agent sent to the British lines. Quick, man! Do not keep me standing here when I have news of importance for the General. Tell him of my coming. Ask that I may see him."

A man came into view at the back of that square of light below the level of Dereck's feet—a big, square man, with fine if somewhat severe and stern features,

a man who looked as if he had a weight of responsibility on his shoulders and as if he were accustomed to command. He was buttoned up closely in a German tunic, on the breast of which an iron cross was pinned. Coming forward into the light he looked up into the darkness till his eyes encountered the squat, ugly figure of the spy.

"Ah, Otto Scholz, yes," he said in such a soft, low voice that one was astounded, for with such a big frame one expected a deep, bass voice which would carry to the far distance. And Dereck, who watched the man closely, could have sworn that he grimaced when he uttered the name of the German.

"Otto Scholz, yes, sir. Come to report. And I have brought with me here a naval officer whom I captured just outside the trenches of the British. It was a stiff fight, but——"

"But he is there. A naval officer, eh?" reflected the officer below, his tones a little louder and a little more energetic. "Naval officer. Oh! That might be important. Leave him outside and descend. You will be glad of some refreshment when you have given your report. Quick, my friend, for this light flashes into the sky and may attract the British gunners. Come down into the dug-out and tell me your story."

Dereck saw the squat figure of the spy assisted down the steps, and watched as the door was swung to, swiftly cutting off that stream of light till it had disappeared entirely, till he and the Turks left to guard him were in total darkness.

"And—and a fellow ought to make the most of the opportunity, eh, what?" the gallant middy asked him-

self with that nonchalance for which he was becoming famous. "Certainly; a fellow never ought to sit down and take things softly. I ain't the one to take 'em lying down, whatever they are. So here goes for a personal rescue!"

Dereck was nothing if not active. Life at one of the best of Britain's public schools had trained his limbs, if it had not so wonderfully trained his brain, and had taught him to look to himself, to seize opportunities and act swiftly in unforeseen circumstances. A sweeping kick sent one of the Turks tumbling headlong, while a sudden plunge, a stout blow from his fist dealt with all the force and weight which he could command, and falling on the jaws of a second man, drove him backward from the topmost stair of the dug-out. It was just a matter of luck that in falling this man caught the third of the Turkish soldiers as he was ascending from the sunken doorway, and bore him backward against the door with such a thud that it was forced open, and the two, clinging and clutching at one another, were precipitated down the rest of the steps into the depths of the dug-out. Dereck had just time to catch the reflection of the lamp, now out of sight, but throwing its rays toward the doorway. Then he turned and bolted. He was free again, though in the very midst of the enemy.

CHAPTER XVIII

Dereck in Difficulties

THERE were loud shouts startling the air in the neighbourhood of the village of Krithia after Mr. Midshipman Smallweed had made those sudden and unexpected movements which brought about his freedom; that is to say, his apparent freedom, or rather, his freedom for the time being from Turkish restraint, though he was still in the lines of the enemy—in their very midst, indeed. The Turk whose legs he had kicked so unceremoniously from beneath him, and who had landed with all the force of his weight in a sitting posture, was so shaken and so winded that, though he made desperate efforts, he could produce only a startled gurgle. And as to the other two, those who had crashed into the door of the dug-out and, bursting it open, had rolled and clattered to the bottom of the steps, they were wellnigh stunned when at length their rapid movements were arrested. They were dazed by what had happened, and were speechless with amazement, not to mention terror. But Otto Scholz was there, and he always had a voice which he was capable of making heard; while with him was that other man, the General, one of the German officers of the Kaiser who had come to direct, to drive if need

be, these wretched Turks. Strangely enough, too, now that he was aroused, he also could give tongue with good effect, though his voice was high-pitched and squeaky.

"What is this?" demanded the spy, startled by the sudden clatter and by the unexpected appearance of the two men rolling into the dug-out. "Drunken men, eh? Get out at once! Above there, arrest these men!"

"But—but—but the prisoner, Excellency!" one of the Turks managed to gasp, as Otto stood above him threateningly.

"The prisoner! Bah! You are intoxicated," shouted the German, forgetting that drunkenness is an uncommon vice amongst this Oriental nation. "Above there, I say! Come down and arrest these wretches."

But not a sound reached him from the outer air at first, and only when he had mounted a few of the steps, till he was in the doorway, was there anything to tell him of the presence of the men he had left outside. Then gasps reached his ear, the gasps of a man struggling to get his breath, of a man who groaned feebly between his gasps and who seemed to be at the top of the stairway. Instantly Otto raced down into the dug-out, and, trampling upon the figures of the two Turks lying there, seized the lamp and raced back towards the open.

"How now! Donnerwetter! One of the escort. But the prisoner!" he bellowed.

"The—the—ah—the prisoner!" the man managed to gasp.

"Yes, fool! the prisoner," shouted Otto Scholz,



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now beside himself with rage, seizing the Turk by the shoulder and shaking him. "He was here a moment ago. I left him in your charge. Where is he?"

"Gone! Clearly gone!" came a voice at his elbow, that soft, shallow voice possessed by the German General. "One moment, Herr Otto Scholz. Let me take the matter in hand, for that is right, seeing that you are a civilian. Wait. Now see!"

He placed a whistle to his lips and blew a shrill blast, which was responded to in an instant by another whistle in the distance. Men could be heard moving. A sharp order was given, and within a minute a dozen men were doubling towards the dug-out. In the meanwhile the Turks who had tumbled so unexpectedly into the depths of the General's quarters, and who had so abruptly disturbed Otto Scholz in the midst of taking refreshment, came dashing up the stairway, their dizziness shaken off for the time being, their hearts in their mouths at the news of the prisoner's escape, and their voices raised in loud warnings.

"Silence!" commanded the General. "Ah! You will not understand my Turkish, eh? You will not heed my words. Then perhaps you will understand if——"

This gentle-spoken man with the severe features, the big body, buttoned so tightly in his military tunic, the shock head of hair common to the Teuton, the fierce Kaiser moustache common to the military sons of the home of "Kultur", allowed no doubt to remain as to his meaning. He dragged a revolver from his belt and cocked it, the lock setting back in position for firing with an ominous click which made the three

Turks turn their eyes in his direction. Then he seized the nearest of them with the other hand, and, swinging him into position, kicked him unmercifully, an example which the craven Otto Scholz followed instantly.

"Ah! That, after all, is the best word of command," said the General a minute later, rearranging his tunic, for it had ruckled up owing to his exertions and owing also to the rotundity of his figure. "In the case of one of our own men, he would, of course, understand; and if he failed to be silent on the instant that a command was given, one would, of course, shoot him down. With these men, however—these Turks—they may not understand. We give them the benefit of the doubt. We kick them first. There is always time to do the shooting. Ha! That is you, Von Ettick. A prisoner has escaped—a British naval officer, a midshipman. You will have the camp searched. Do not return to your quarters till you have found him."

A tall, robustly-built officer had come forward through the darkness, and had thrust his way through the ranks of a section of Turkish soldiers who had doubled toward the dug-out at his orders, and, arrived there, had halted in the rays of the lamp still held by Otto Scholz.

"A naval officer, General," he said, saluting, and clicking his heels in approved Prussian fashion. "He shall be found."

"He will be found. He must be found, you mean," declared the General with significant abruptness, his voice now soft and smooth as it had been on his first introduction to the reader. "There can be no doubt, Von Ettick. This prisoner is still a prisoner, still in

our lines. You will make yourself responsible for his capture. And now, Herr Otto Scholz, we will go into the dug-out again, where you can finish your repast and give me full information."

Von Ettick clicked his heels again and turned, turned with a scowl on his face, while the light fell upon his shoulders. He was in the very act of giving an order to his section when, without the smallest warning, a shell plumped into the ground almost at his feet, and exploding on the instant, wrecked the stairway leading to the dug-out, and scattered the General and Otto Scholz and the whole party. Indeed, it did more, for half at least of the section of Turkish soldiers were killed outright.

"Bah! Out with the light! Down into the dug-out with it!" cried the General in shrill tones. "Those English have the range of us, and we should have been wiser. That is the worst of some of their shells. Guns are going all the while, so that one never knows when one is being specially aimed at. And then some of their projectiles arrive without making any particular sound. Adieu, Von Ettick! You will report in due course."

He dived into the dug-out after the figure of Otto Scholz, and banged the door to, leaving the officer he had appointed to search for Dereck in total darkness. He left him bewildered also, and by no means in the best of tempers. For this Von Ettick knew the General well, knew him as a soft-spoken, hard-tongued, and hard-handed leader. He swore beneath his breath, and shouted at the remnants of his section. Then he dragged his helmet from his head, and passed the

fingers of his hands through his stubbly, short hair.

"And—and where is a man to turn to carry out such a task?" he asked himself angrily. "Which way can this prisoner have run, and— Ah! if I could but catch him! A British naval officer, eh? One who has helped more than all to thwart the Kaiser. Let me but lay my hands upon him and he shall suffer; yes, though I have to bring him living still to the General. Close up there, men! Right turn! March! We will return to our quarters, and then break up into threes as soon as I have gathered reinforcements. Then we will each take a different portion of the lines and search them. Donnerwetter! How I hate these British, and—and how I loathe this bullying General!"

Meanwhile Dereck had fled for his life. Turning swiftly from the dug-out, and careless of the direction he took, he rushed away into the darkness, and did not halt till he had covered at least a hundred yards. Then he stopped abruptly and looked about him. There was the faintest reflection above the spot from which he had just fled, and as he watched the light grew stronger. Presently a figure appeared bearing a lamp, a figure easily distinguishable as that of Otto Scholz.

"And ain't he just in a fury!" thought Dereck. "That chap who has come up the steps after him is the General, I suppose. Wonder what general? German, of course. You can tell that by the cut of him. And—halloo! what's that?"

Out of the tail of his eye he watched the approach of Von Ettick and his subsequent movements. He

saw the General kicking that unfortunate Turk, and heard the report of that British shell as it disturbed and damaged the party. But it was not all this that chiefly attracted the middy's attention. It was something else; something which began to make his hair rise—and Dereck was not given to being frightened—something which sent a cold chill down his spine, and which set every pore dripping. It was an uncanny sensation; yes, a sensation rather than anything else, something intangible as yet, something which he felt sure threatened his safety. For against that distant light—indeed, against the yellowish blast of flame which the exploding shell had thrown out—he had caught sight of a shape, an indefinite shape between himself and the dug-out, a shape which might be the figure of a man. And that shape was surely coming toward him, creeping on all fours, in a deathly silence, watching him closely and appearing able to see him. Dereck even fancied he could detect two luminous eyes and could hear the man's breathing. He heard voices now, the commands of the General and the reply of Von Ettick. Then the light disappeared, and there followed the sharp words of command of the officer left in charge of the remnants of the section of Turkish soldiers. It was dark again, and yet——

"There's something there, something tracking me," he told himself. "Wonder what I ought to do? Run for it, eh? Then he'd shout. Supposing I move to one side and see what happens."

Very quietly and stealthily he crept some few paces to his left, and crouched close to the ground.

"S-s-s-st!" That was a note of warning surely,

a low sound meant to reach his ears and his alone.

"But it might be a ruse. And besides, who the dickens knows me here? Who wants to warn me? Every man about is an enemy. That's a Turk or a skulking German. Well, he's spotted me right enough, though he must have the eyes of a cat to be able to do so. I'll wait for him and dodge him. If he makes a rush I'll shoot him. Bah! No, I can't. I haven't a revolver—wait though. Yes, I have. Those fellows omitted to disarm me. Now——"

"Ss-s-s-st!" There it was again, low and penetrating, a note of warning if ever there was one. Dereck crouched, silent and motionless, listening intently. Twice in succession he heard the hiss of this crawling shape as it got nearer. Then, in desperation, with that recklessness for which the gallant middy was so notorious, he flung the sound back into the darkness.

"Let him know I heard," he thought. "It'll show him I'm ready. Beats me who the fellow could be. A friend, eh? Impossible. And yet——"

And yet, why should this crawling figure take such pains to let his warning note fall on the ears of the fleeing British officer alone? Why should he creep so silently towards Dereck, when, supposing him to be an enemy, as seemed natural enough, he should have shouted a warning to his fellows and called lustily to them to let them know that he was on the tracks of the fugitive?

Ah! That was a Turkish shout.

"One of the party turned on to search for me," thought Dereck. "Came from over yonder, and—and men are coming this way. They've got lanterns.

That's nasty. Now what on earth am I to do? If I run for it I shall rush into the arms of the searchers in another direction. Wish there was such a thing as a dug-out near at hand to give a fellow shelter."

Things were beginning to wear an ugly aspect, for there were half a dozen lamps at least being borne toward him, and he could hear the voices of many men. In his anxiety he turned toward them, forgetting in this additional danger that shape which was now much nearer at hand, that mysterious being who had dogged his steps, who had been creeping toward him, and who, strangely enough, now that the searchers had put in an appearance, had ceased to send out those warning hisses. But were they actually a warning? Were they instead merely the noise made by an enemy, by a Turk who was tracking him down?

"Then there are all these other beggars. Looks as if I was properly in the soup this time. What an idiot I was to run out after that Otto fellow!" Dereck told himself bitterly.

Yet he was not down-hearted, and anything but frightened. He was certainly troubled, however—troubled with the multiplicity of his enemies. For the men bearing those lamps were getting nearer, carrying the lights hither and thither, as if they were searching every foot of the ground. They called to one another too, in the somewhat musical, soft voice of the East, in that language strange to the middy's ear, yet smooth and pleasant for all that. Then a harsher accent disturbed his senses. It was the voice of Von Ettick, like the snap of a whip, guttural and ill-tempered, bullying, in fact, for no one could mistake

the tones. He too was nearer, dangerously nearer; and that man who was tracking Dereck, what had become of him?

"Lying low. Waiting to pounce upon me, eh? Dirty trick!" the middy grumbled, grumbled in the most good-natured way. For that was Dereck Smallweed all over; it was one of the many fascinating points about this jovial young sailor. He was such a good-tempered fellow, and it took such a lot to make him genuinely angry. Not that he never lost his temper. He did on occasion, and just of late he had been on the point of exploding. For that lamp which the fat, squat Otto Scholz, the German traitor and spy, had carried out into the open had shown first of all the General kicking one of the Turks, and had then disclosed the fact that the spy himself was following suit. It made Dereck's gorge rise on the instant.

"Just fancy! The brutes! Supposing we were to try that game. But—pah! not a single British officer would think of doing so, and therefore one needn't wait to consider how the men would take it. They've spirit. They ain't the fellows to stand bullying. Not much! Rather not! Dirty dogs, these Germans. Ain't got any sort of sporting instinct. If I get a chance, one of these days I'll get one in on that Otto fellow that'll make his fat shake."

But would the indignant Dereck ever have the opportunity? It didn't look very much like it at that precise moment, for those lamp-bearers were nearer, searching every inch of the ground: while the man who had been tracking the sailor, the fellow who had

made those curious, incomprehensible sounds, where was he?

A hand gripped the wrist of the sailor, the wrist below which his revolver was held. Stealthy fingers closed round the limb with the strength of a vice, while, as he started, another silent, stealthy hand shot like lightning to his face and closed over his mouth. It made the middy jump. It made him swing round with furious energy. He was in the very act of closing with this stealthy enemy when—"S-s-s-st!"

"Who—what's that?" demanded the sailor, his voice low and quivering with intense feeling.

"S-s-s-st!" the sound was repeated, while the hand gripping his mouth was lowered. Then the other began to pull on his wrist, as if this silent, stealthy fellow wished to lead him away.

"Hold on!" gasped Dereck. "Who—who the dickens are you? And where——"

But still there was no direct reply, only that sound, which now appeared to be cautioning him more even than ever, and which he could have sworn had a note of entreaty somewhere in it. What was he to do? Go with this mysterious person? Allow himself to be led away to—"to some hole, and there be murdered? Not much!" gasped Dereck. "Look here," he said, turning fiercely upon the man who held his wrist. "Who are you? Turk, German, or—or what?"

"British! or at least, in the British service. Hist, man! Come along."

Did Dereck know the voice, did he recognize the tones? He wasn't certain; but common sense, the

common sense, the swift intuition which comes to men at moments of great danger, told the sailor that, whoever this stranger was, he was at least inclined to be friendly.

"Lead on then," he said recklessly. "But—no monkey tricks, mind. I ain't going to be downed in a hurry, and if you try any dirty game on me, well, look out for yourself. I ain't the fellow to wear kid gloves. So think it over."

"Come!" That was all. One single word, and after it a stronger pull upon his wrist. Dereck gave way, and throwing himself on hands and knees, crept off by the side of this silent person. And side by side they made their way through scrub and grass, and across a wide patch of open, sun-baked soil, taking, the sailor noticed, a direction away from the men bearing the lanterns. For two hundred yards they crawled, for the most part at little more than a snail's pace. Then the man beside Dereck tugged at his wrist and intimated that he should rise.

"Follow," he said in a whisper. "Take my hand and come swiftly. I will lead you to safety."

"But—safety—where?" demanded Dereck, even now doubtful of this self-appointed guide. "Who the dickens are you, and——"

"Come. There is no time for argument. Follow."

Who was the man? for a man it certainly was. He towered beside the sailor, and in the darkness just his faint outline could be seen. Beyond that there was nothing by which he might be recognized, save perhaps the voice, and that was not a natural one. It was strained, it was barely raised above a whisper,

and it trembled ever so little, as if this person were consumed with doubt and anxiety. There was one thing, however, about the fellow of which Dereck was quite sure. He was just as eager to get away from the Turks searching the camp with the aid of their lanterns as he, Dereck, was. He was more than eager, in fact, for he raced along now that they were on their feet, dragging the sailor after him. And so for a while they progressed through the darkness, away from the sound of the ships' guns, away from those men who were under the command of the sour and ill-tempered Von Ettick. Then, of a sudden, the man came to a stop.

"Wait here," he said, still in the same whisper. "Sit on the ground so that your figure cannot be seen against the stars. I have a dug-out somewhere near, only it wants finding. There! Sit!"

Dereck did as he was told on the instant, for as the moments passed he was absorbing more and more confidence in this strange individual, this silent guide, this mysterious person who had tracked him in such curious fashion, and who had certainly rescued him from those searchers. For had he not come along, where would our hero have gone to? In what direction could he have turned?

"Fire away," he said. "I'll wait, and—and—er—I say."

"This isn't the place to say unnecessary things," the man told him. "What?"

"There! You're asking me immediately after telling me to shut my mouth. I was going to be pleasant," said Dereck jovially. "I was going to

take all that back about the kid gloves and the monkey tricks and hanky-panky, don't you know. But fire ahead. We'll yarn afterwards. Where's this dug-out? And—oh yes, I say, any grub in the neighbourhood?"

He heard the fellow giggle, and grinned himself.

"Not half a bad sort," he thought. "Wonder who he is? Wish he'd get me out of this hole, for I ain't so keen to become that Otto fellow's prisoner again. Eh?"

"Come. I have found the steps. Look out, or you'll tumble."

Dereck nearly plunged into the bottom of a narrow pit, into the depths of which a steep flight of earth steps led. His companion gripped him just in time and directed his feet downward. Then he pushed a door open. The sailor heard the rusty hinges creak, and bobbed his head down as he entered. The door was thrown to carefully, and once again he heard the hinges creak and the heavy latch fall into its place.

"Wait. I'll get a light. Stop where you are."

"Right-o! And, I say," called Dereck, "perhaps you won't mind introducing yourself after all this business. Who are you?"

He heard a match scraped along a box at some little distance, and caught the reflection of the flare. It showed him three earth walls, a roof composed for the most part of earth, though big beams supported it, and a floor of the same material under foot. For the rest, there was an old box in the centre of this dug-out which did duty as a table, and other

boxes near at hand which most likely acted as chairs for the owner of this bomb-proof. As for the owner himself, his features were still shrouded as he bent over a lamp with his back in Dereck's direction. But this seemed to be certain: he was a Turkish officer of the line, dressed in the latest khaki clothing.

"Turkish!" exclaimed Dereck, almost bursting with impatience. "And speaks English fluently, with just the suspicion of an accent. That's what bothers me. I've heard the same accent before. But where? And—here, I say, who are you, anyway?"

The man stood upright over the lamp, which was now flaring, and, adjusting the wick, turned slowly in the middy's direction.

"Look!" he said, and lifted the lamp till the chimney struck the roof of the dug-out. "Seen me before, eh? I'm the fellow you——"

"Alphonse!" shouted Dereck, springing forward and seizing the hand of the Frenchman.

"Steady, man! Do you want to tell the whole of the camp that a Frenchman, in the employ of the British, and a British naval officer are in their midst? Speak gently. But—oh, ain't this ripping! Who'd have thought it possible? And—and did ever a fellow do a more stupid thing! Just fancy chasing a spy into the lines of the enemy."

"But—Alphonse Albone! Well, I *am* blowed!" declared Dereck, and he laid particular emphasis on the "am". "But how——?"

"How, when, and where, and all the rest of it. Sit down," said Alphonse abruptly. "I'll dish out some food for you. Then we can gas. But I can

tell you this much now. I'm a Turkish officer—not a real one, known by and commissioned by the Sultan, but the same sort of officer as that scoundrel Otto Scholz appeared to be. I'm a make-believe, doing a bit of spying on my own, simply because otherwise I'd have been shot or sent off as a prisoner. You see, I could act the part and speak the lingo. Ergo—Latin, my boy—ergo, I became a Turkish officer."

"And then——"

"Well, I was on the look-out to make my escape. I'd got things fixed up nicely, and then you turned up in these parts. We'll go together."

"Splendid! Which way? I say, that grub looks ripping."

"Then get in at it. Which way? Towards the Sea of Marmora. The coast of the peninsula is out of the question. Of course, it won't be all honey. It'll be a ticklish job."

"Who cares?" cried Dereck, his mouth more than half full of the food Alphonse had now put before him.

"Then to-morrow perhaps."

"The sooner the better, my boy. I'm looking forward to the business."

You couldn't depress the Hon. Dereck Smallweed, and as circumstances had proved, you couldn't frighten him. He was a splendid fellow to have as a companion in times of danger, and bearing in mind Alphonse's prowess and coolness there was a chance —a good chance, let us add—of the two of them getting out of the clutches of the enemy.

CHAPTER XIX

The Sea of Marmora

"AND now, what about this job of ours?" asked Dereck, when some hours of refreshing sleep had made a new man of him. Indeed, a glance at Mr. Midshipman Smallweed in the dim depths of the dug-out to which Alphonse had so cleverly led him displayed a young man who, save for his dishevelled appearance, would have passed muster even aboard a Dreadnought. For even if Dereck were horribly dirty, his clothing soiled and torn and creased badly, yet the frame within was as active as ever, while beneath the tattered and earth-encrusted coat there beat a heart as true and gallant as ever did credit to a naval officer. The young fellow's eyes sparkled, while there was a devil-may-care look about him as he sat on a box, his back against the earth wall of the dug-out, and nibbled at a biscuit.

"These biscuits are some thing," he told Alphonse with a grin. "Tasty, eh? and all the rest of it. Turkish, you say. Well now, hardly. Made in Germany, I think—like the Turkish soldiery, eh? Like Turkish officers. Lor, Alphonse! You're a Turkish officer just now. Just fancy you being made in Germany, like our dear and beloved friend Otto!"

It was no use getting into a rage with such a fellow, no use even pretending indignation. Dereck was incorrigible, and Alphonse knew it.

"Just you leave me and the Germans alone," he told him severely. "I've got punishment enough in having such a fellow as Otto Scholz to deal with. And besides, that reminds me. Who's he working for? How long's he been with the enemy, and how is it that I haven't met him?"

"Hold on! As if you wanted to meet him! And besides, let's talk it all over afterwards. Who wants to worry about that villain? Now, about this escape of ours. I'm anxious to be going, for I can't stand these beastly clothes much longer. A fellow wants to have a bath, and all that. A shave would come handy, and I'd do if I had my hair cut."

Dereck would certainly "do" with a good deal of scrubbing and cleaning, and certainly he didn't cut, in this dug-out, the figure he was accustomed to when aboard ship. There the middy was as smart as they make them, and in the navy they make them extremely smart, we may assure the reader. Here, as we have described, Dereck was but a sorry scarecrow.

"What about the matter?" he asked Alphonse insistently. "We've had our feed, and we've put in a sleep. Let's get a move on, so as to see more of the fighting. How's it to be done? Where do we steer for? Sea of Marmora, you said. Do we swim out of the place then? Bit of a business, eh, my boy? Want a bit of doing. Only if you say that that's the game, of course we take it on promptly. But it mayn't be. Perhaps you've another scheme. You

may have got the loan of a Turkish steamer. Perhaps you are going to hire one, or even steal one. Alphonse, that's wicked! Stealin's off, you know. Only, of course, you might borrow one, eh? and force the crew to take us into home waters. Now, my dear old boy, perhaps you'll——"

"Stop!" gasped the Frenchman. "How you do chatter! You don't give a chap even a chance of saying what he's planned. Look here. We're in the midst of the enemy, you know."

"Tell me another," grinned Dereck. "I'm a child, of course! I know nothing at all, no, nothing; and I didn't get here by the help of our friend, that Otto!"

"Shut up, do! We're——"

"In the midst of the enemy—yes, allrighto!"

"Tut! How you do annoy a fellow! We're in a dug-out, and I'm a Turkish officer, free to move about up till now, but rather scared of doing so, since I've learned that that man has joined the Turks. Well now——"

"We're coming to it," laughed Dereck.

"Here goes then," said Alphonse, lighting a cigarette and filling the dug-out with smoke. "As an officer, a Turkish officer, I'm entitled to do lots of things, to boss it over the soldiers and sailors. Well, I've thought the thing out."

"Brain-wave, I suppose," grinned Dereck.

"And I've got a plan. Listen to this, and don't interrupt or I'll chuck you out of the dug-out. Troops are passing from Constantinople to Maidos every day, though it's true that the British submarines

have entered the Sea of Marmora and made things unpleasant."

"They would," Dereck told him with a pleasant and meaning smile. "When the navy—ahem!—when our boys get to business there's something doing generally. They're only unpleasant, eh?"

"They've made the Turk sit up, and they've sent some of the Turkish transports to the bottom. But I don't want to yarn about the British navy and their submarines; I'm out to tell you what we may be able to do, and to explain that I had to mention that Turkish vessels pass to and fro across the Sea of Marmora. Now I thought that we might be on one of those Turkish vessels."

"Of course; now we come to it," smiled Dereck. "We take a trip, a kind of week-end business, eh? Half-a-crown return ticket, and lunch thrown in? You're a brick, Alphonse."

"I wish I'd one here to throw at your head," growled the Frenchman. "You're really the most aggravating beggar I ever came across; for here am I trying to explain how we are going to save our lives and secure our liberty, and here are you grinning like an ape and making the most absurd statements. Can't you see, Dereck, that the matter is really serious?"

"Of course I can," the middy laughed, trying to become serious in case he might be chaffing the Frenchman at a time when such chaff would make him irritable. Not that that was likely at all, for the Frenchman had shown, throughout those weeks that he had known Dereck and his cousins, that he was

the most difficult person under the sun to ruffle. Indeed, Dereck himself was far more short-tempered, far more readily roused to heat than was Alphonse; and when incensed was apt to boil over like a kettle, scalding his own fingers and the fingers of those with whom he was angry. With Alphonse, displeasure took a different form entirely. He was unruffled, calm, cold, and undemonstrative. Yet the Frenchman had a temper, and if ever he were within an ace of losing it it was when the scoundrel Otto Scholz happened to be mentioned. Then his somewhat long and sunken cheeks grew pallid, his deep-set eyes flashed in a most peculiar manner, and once or twice Dereck and his friends could have sworn that they heard his teeth gritting together. But with Dereck who could be angry for long? The fellow was impossible, incorrigible, utterly careless on most occasions; yet with a fund of genuine feeling beneath all his fun, and a deep sense of sympathy for the troubles and the peculiarities of all with whom he came in contact.

"I'll stow rotting now, Alphonse," he said soberly. "But I can't help having a quip whenever there's a chance. It livens a chap up; and, deuce take it, a chap wants bucking up a little in a hole like this, with earth walls all round, just like a grave, and Turks outside—not to mention Germans. Now, you get on. We got to the point where you asserted that we might just as well take a trip, as these bally Turks are doing. By 'we' you mean you. I ain't a Turk, don't forget, and I don't believe you could make me look a bit like one."

"And don't mean to," Alphonse told him. "If you've made up your mind to hold your tongue, I can get on with the story."

"Ho!" began Dereck, an indignant flash in his eyes. "Hold my tongue, indeed! I——"

"You'll just sit down like a good chap and listen," Alphonse said, passing a cigarette across to the middy. "Here, you smoke; I won't say a word about it."

"You won't what?" demanded Dereck.

"Just so," laughed Alphonse, delighted to have stirred the sailor. "I've found out your weakness now, my boy, and if there's any nonsense I'll haul you up before your Commander. Smoking ain't encouraged in young chaps like you. But there, there!" he added, waving a hand at Dereck to silence him, for he had now roused the tiger, "you can tell me all about it later on, and meanwhile I propose to unfold my plans before you. We've got to the point where there are ships—Turkish ships—and Turkish officers and men passing to and fro. You ain't a Turk, that's true, but you can be a Turk at night-time quite easily. When darkness falls, I propose to bandage you pretty thoroughly. You've been hit by one of those beastly French 75's, and shrapnel has made a mess of your beauty. There will be a bandage all round your head and over your face, and your mouth'll be closed for the time being. Ahem! that'll be most unfortunate, won't it?"

The remark drew a sharp glance from the middy. He looked up instantly and squared his shoulders. Then he grinned, for Dereck could enjoy a joke with

anyone, even if it happened to be at his own expense.

"You get on," he grumbled, "and when we're out of this fix, we'll have a cheery little talk together. I'll let you see whose mouth ought to be closed, and perhaps it won't be so jolly temporary when I've done with you. Now?"

"Now," grinned Alphonse, who had certainly managed to get a little of his own back in the conversation, "we have lots of time, and I think, if you are agreeable to be silent, we shall manage to get these plans fixed before nightfall. It's agreed that you are a wounded Turk, shrapnelled by the French, and it's agreed equally that your beauty has been spoilt, and your mouth shut for the time being. Ahem!

"Now, it so happens that, as a Turkish officer, for the time being, I have contrived to purloin a pass to Constantinople. I am not a very senior officer, as you can imagine, but it's quite possible to obtain the clothing of a man who is quite a big swell out in the Dardanelles. Now, we'll have a feed, and make our way down to Maidos. Of course, it'll want careful doing, for there will be other people about, and there will be lights there, too, for the British don't do much flying in the darkness, and the ships ain't able to see up the 'Narrows' as far as Maidos. There's a little dispatch boat that generally lies off one of the piers at Maidos, and I fancy that we shall be able to make our way aboard her. After that everything depends on chance. We may have the luck to slip down the 'Narrows' and out into the Ægean Sea. On the other hand——"

"On the other hand," grinned Dereck, "we may

have the luck to continue the trip to Constantinople. If that happened, Alphonse my boy, there would not be much of the Turk about me by the time these enemies had done with us. But we won't anticipate failure, for this thing has got to be carried through; and besides, think of the information we shall have to give to our own people."

"We!" exclaimed Alphonse, aghast at the assurance of the middy; "why, you've only just arrived here, and that in the darkness, and what on earth do you know of the dispositions of the Turks and their armies? You take my breath away."

"Oh, well!" smiled the middy, "by 'we' I meant 'you', of course, only I'm bound to pick up something by the time we're through and have joined our people. By the time I get aboard the cruiser again they'll be jolly glad to have me back, I can tell you; and what with what one's gone through, and all the rest of it, don't you know, a chap will have quite decent treatment. Remember that dinner the old Admiral gave us, Alphonse? Perhaps he'll stand another. There's no saying; though I suppose we chaps ought to club together some day, and give him a return invitation."

There was no suppressing the middy, and Alphonse turned away to hide his amazement and his amusement. The Frenchman, possessed of a vivid and fertile imagination, could see before his eyes the wonderful and dashing Dereck Smallweed, together with those two gallant cousins of his, seated about a table, perhaps in some dingy restaurant, perchance at Alexandria; and, as their guest, that austere,

somewhat grumpy, but entirely human individual whom the middy had spoken of as the old Admiral. How that gallant sailor would enjoy such a feast, if only discipline and the regulations of the Service allowed of his accepting such an invitation! How he would chuckle and smile at Dereck's magnificence, at the middy's charm of manner, at the ease and assurance with which he would carry off the onerous post of host to such an exalted individual!

Alphonse now busied himself in preparing for their attempted escape that evening; and then, producing food from a box, and a kettle from one corner, he lit a brazier, and soon had steaming coffee to offer to Dereck. But in spite of food and drink, and in spite of pleasant conversation, the hours dragged heavily enough for both of them. There was a tense feeling in the confined air of that dug-out. There was a longing on the part of both for the moment to arrive to put their fortunes to the test, and to set out upon another adventure. Not that either of them had grave fears of the consequences, unless it happened that the traitor Otto Scholz happened to run across them and denounce them to the authorities. Then, indeed, matters would wear a serious aspect; for was it not Dereck and Alphonse who had obtained definite information of the intentions of the Turks and their German masters to attack the Suez Canal? and had they not handed on the full tale to their chiefs in Alexandria?

Then what of the position of the Frenchman? He had disappeared after that first landing at the Dardanelles; and though the voluble Dereck had given

him very little opportunity of explaining what had happened, we may supply the deficiency ourselves, and say that the Frenchman had become surrounded by a number of enemies. Fortunately it was dark at the time, and none had recognized him as one on the side of the British. The fierce fire of those brave men who had forced a landing on Gallipoli had driven the enemy backward, and in the rush and confusion Alphonse had been carried along with the Turkish infantry.

It was then too late to attempt to rejoin his friends; and being the astute young fellow he was, and moreover having the huge advantage of being able to speak both Turkish and German, he had made the best of an extremely bad matter, and had contrived by some clever method to usurp the post of a Turkish officer. He had attached himself, as a matter of fact, to the transport section of the Turkish armies, and when questioned as to his coming, was clever enough to be able to give a tale which instantly passed muster. Moreover, as transport officer, he came into contact with but few of the Turks, and with these often enough at night-time; for during the day the area behind Achi Baba was none too "healthy". Those ponderous shells thrown by the *Queen Elizabeth* and others of the Allied fleet steaming off the isthmus made life somewhat unendurable behind the Turkish lines, and made it but reasonable for those who could to find safety in underground chambers. Thus, Alphonse passed his days for the most part in this dug-out to which he had brought Dereck; and at night struggled with mules and

Turkish transport carriers, in bringing food and ammunition from Maidos.

"I know nearly every foot of the way," he told Dereck as the dusk of evening fell, and the time for their departure drew nearer; "and what is more, I know it in the darkness rather better than I do in the daylight. I have been thinking a lot since we had that talk to-day, and I've had quite an inspiration."

"How much?" asked the middy carelessly. "Eh?"

"An inspiration," the Frenchman told him, nettled.

"Oh! Like that!" grinned Dereck. "A brain-wave, like the one you had before, eh? Well, I always was an encouraging sort of beggar, though it's a bit of a bore at times, I must confess. What's this brilliant brain-wave, this inspiration that's been troubling you all these hours and has finally boiled over?"

"This," snapped Alphonse: "I have told you that you are to be a wounded Turk——"

"With filthy bandages all round my head. Yes, but I——"

"And your mouth closed, thank goodness!" exclaimed Alphonse. "You needn't glare at me like that, Dereck; you deserve what you've got, and 'pon my word, you really are too trying. Let a chap get on without so many interruptions. We'll pass over the fact that you're a Turk, and all the rest of it, and come to the inspiration."

"Yes, do," said Dereck, as he blew a puff of smoke in the direction of the Frenchman. "I'm waiting anxiously to hear all about it. This is really most exciting. Now you——"

"No, you," said Alphonse, almost crossly; "you, you young bounder, are a wounded Turk under suspicion of being a spy and a traitor."

"Oh! Like our dear friend Otto. Thank you!" said Dereck dryly.

"And I'm escorting you to the mainland," the Frenchman told him, ignoring his interruption. "I take you down to the pier to-night, and of course we just go along easily, till we have spotted the boat that we propose to borrow."

"Borrow?" smiled Dereck. "Well, that's another term: let's call 'a spade a spade'; if we have any luck, we pinch the boat, and that's all there is to say."

"It is then," said Alphonse, "that I grip you by the shoulder, and cuff you if necessary. I shall push you aboard, and order the crew to make out of the harbour instantly. You follow?"

For all his chaff, and all his light-hearted flippancy, Dereck could see the wisdom of the scheme most easily, and smacked the Frenchman on the back to show his hearty approval. More than that, he was eager to put the plan to the test; and Alphonse knew well enough that he could absolutely trust the midshipman to play the rôle assigned to him.

They waited in the dug-out for some few hours longer, and then, having stuffed their pockets with food, and each having hung a water-bottle over his shoulders, they extinguished the lamp most carefully, and going to the door, listened for some moments.

"All clear," whispered Alphonse. "Now, just remember, Dereck, you're wounded, and your face is badly damaged; you can only mumble, and that

hurts you. If we are stopped, leave everything to me, and the darkness will help us wonderfully."

Prior to leaving the dug-out—indeed, quite an hour before doing so—he had caused the sailor to don a Turkish overcoat and boots, and had swathed his head with bandages, which, much to Dereck's disgust, were none of the cleanest.

"Pah! Reminds me of those awful clothes we wore in the desert," grumbled the middy. "Where on earth did you get such relics, Alphonse? But there you are," he added resignedly; "a chap has to put up with something in this life, don't you know, and I'm ready to be a martyr for the sake of the cause and in the hope of liberty."

As a matter of fact, even in broad daylight he might have passed muster amongst the Turks; and the fact of his head being swathed in bandages, and it being practically impossible for him to talk, made the deception easier. Besides, anyone looking at him would realize at once he was so severely damaged that talking was out of the question; so that, what with the bandages about his head, the tattered Turkish coat over his shoulders, the fez which Alphonse had jammed on to his head, and those Turkish boots, Dereck looked the part he had to play to perfection.

For Alphonse, all that one need say is that he appeared to be precisely what he had been aping for days past. No one could suspect him to be other than a Turkish officer; and supposing him to be suddenly accosted, why, even then the Frenchman was not at a loss, for he was as glib in the Turkish language as he could be in his own French.

Yet there must have been, on that historic ground, someone who at some time had conceived a doubt as to the origin and the straightforwardness of this same Turkish officer. For, unknown to himself, Alphonse had come under observation, and, unfortunately for him and for Dereck, it happened that that mere suspicion had been increased by the search which followed Dereck's strange disappearance. That the latter was still in the neighbourhood of Achi Baba seemed obvious, for escape across the stretch to the British lines, either at the top of the peninsula or at Gaba Tepe, where the Australians and New Zealanders had landed, was an impossibility. On the sea side there was even less chance of his making good his escape. So that Otto Scholz, biting his nails and gnawing at his moustache, swore to himself in his vexation that this sailor officer, who had worsted him so easily, should be captured, and for that same reason swore at all and sundry who had been placed under his command so as to aid him in tracing the fugitive.

A mere whisper under such circumstances is enough on most occasions to set a man wondering, to cause him to probe a matter which up to then may not have been worth attention. That whisper came from a Turkish officer who had worked with the Commissariat, and who for some little while had been curious as to the identity of Alphonse. The whisper reached the ear of the traitor Otto, and, snatching at it as a drowning man clutches at a straw, the German immediately set about an enquiry.

Yet to discover the whereabouts of the dug-out in which this suspicious Turkish officer dwelt was by no

means an easy matter, particularly as it happened that the warning came to the German just as dusk was falling. But Otto was one of those persistent individuals who, when they have some particular object in view, and more especially if that object be the hunting down of another individual, take infinite pains to probe to the depths even such a little thing as a whisper.

Even as Alphonse and Dereck slid out of that dug-out and passed into the night, Otto and half-a-dozen followers gained the spot, and, having listened, entered the underground chamber, and discovering the lamp, struck a match with which to light it.

"Warm! Ach, Himmel! I tell you the lamp is warm," cried Otto, *sotto voce*, his eyes bulging hideously, as he gripped the lighted lamp and held it up so as to illuminate the whole chamber. "Yes, and here one has a tale that is not difficult to read. There are two plates left on this old box, which did service as a table. Two men have smoked in this dug-out, and—and—and the lamp was warm," he suddenly added, turning swiftly to the door. "That means that they can only just have extinguished it. They are near, these two—the sailor officer and the rascal who has befriended him. So, Ussuf, you were right in suspecting this officer. No doubt he is a spy, and by chance came across the Englishman and helped him. Let the men spread out, and we will follow."

Stealing along through the darkness, Alphonse led his companion straight towards the harbour at Maidos; following a broad road most of the time, but having occasionally to leave it and make detours across the

open, rough ground, so as to avoid parties of reinforcements who were marching inland.

It was perhaps an hour after they had left the dug-out that they found themselves quite close to the harbour; and though there were not many lights burning, there were a few here and there which, because of their reflections in the water, told the couple that they were close to the spot where their adventures on land were likely to cease and those at sea to commence.

"Remember," cautioned Alphonse in a whisper, "you can't talk; you're a beastly spy; you're a——"

"And all the rest of it," growled Dereck. "Go on. That's a boat lying alongside a pier. Jingo! Won't it be jolly to get aboard her!"

Alphonse had gripped him by the arm, and pushed him forward and down a slope which led to a narrow pier running out into the water. It was very low, and seemed to float upon the surface; and moored to it, and emerging from the water at almost the same level, was a small picket-boat, from the short funnel of which there streamed a tiny film of smoke. Dereck could see it against the light of a lamp hanging in the for'ard rigging, and at the sight his heart gave a bound, while the very smell of the sea set his pulses tingling. Yet he had a rôle to play, and responding to the pressure of Alphonse's arm, he advanced as if reluctantly.

"Aboard there!" the Frenchman called, in low but peremptory tones, and at once a man stepped on to the pier and advanced toward him. "I have a special mission to Constantinople," he whispered in the man's ear; "we have taken a spy, and it is urgent that I should take him to head-quarters at the very first

moment. Listen! My pass is in my pocket, and shall be shown to you the instant we are on board and have pushed off. Be quick! If there is any delay there will be serious questions to answer."

This was Turkey; and that being the case, and perhaps because the Germans had already set an example of what could be done in the case of those who were recalcitrant, the man saluted Alphonse clumsily, and led the way on board. Then he gave a sharp order, and as if by magic two figures appeared and cast off the ropes mooring the boat. There was another order, and someone down below in the heart of the little picket-boat seemed to come to life quite suddenly, for smoke belched from the short funnel and steam began to hiss from the escape pipe. Then the vessel throbbed from end to end, while the propeller thrashed the water astern and cast spray into the air.

They were off, and in a twinkling it seemed that the pier was quite a distance from them. But yet it was not so far that a lamp hanging at the entrance of it did not illuminate it quite distinctly; and there, rushing upon the place, appeared just at this moment some half-dozen figures—one of them a short, squat individual, who shouted to the skipper of this picket-boat to return instantly.

Alphonse sped across the deck to the man, while Dereck tore off his bandages and leapt himself with the agility of a monkey into the engine-room.

"You go on with stoking," he told the Turkish "greaser" threateningly.

"Go forward," commanded Alphonse, putting a revolver at the head of the skipper.

CHAPTER XX

A Submarine to the Rescue

IT was Otto Scholz, the treacherous German spy, who had dashed with his followers on to the tiny pier at Maidos, from which Dereck Smallweed and Alphonse Albone had so recently put off. No one who had ever met the underhand, ugly little rascal, and had heard him shout abuse at anyone, could have mistaken the voice, though even the voice was unnecessary for the purpose of detection. For where else was there a figure to be discovered anything similar to that of the spy? The dim light shot from that single lantern on to the floating pier was yet sufficiently strong to outline the short, stumpy, squat figure of this German.

"Halt!" he was screeching at the top of his voice. "Bring that ship back again instantly, for there are spies aboard—British spies."

The hand of the skipper, standing so close to Alphonse, went out with a jerk towards the signal by means of which he kept himself in touch with the diminutive engine-room of the craft; but Alphonse's revolver touched his neck, and set the Turk quivering.

"If you please," said Alphonse in his sweetest tones —and the taciturn and somewhat morose Frenchman could be as sweet as honey when he liked; "you'll just

sit down on the deck beside me, while I manage the wheel; and just remember this, my beauty, I've quite enough to do to look after the steering of this vessel without wasting time in looking after you. So if you are troublesome, don't be surprised or annoyed if I shoot you instantly."

It was all said very quietly, very sweetly, and without the smallest trace of annoyance. Yet there was a sinister note in the Frenchman's voice, and the Turk, hearing it, sat down on the deck promptly, and fixing his eyes on the stream of smoke now bursting from the squat funnel, remained there without a movement.

As for Dereck, that young gentleman had soon made himself master of the engine-room and the stoke-hole. It may be said, in fact, that everywhere Dereck Smallweed went he was one to be taken note of. Dropping down the short iron ladder which led to the combined stoke-hole and engine-room of the tiny craft which he and Alphonse had "borrowed", to use their own expression, he found himself face to face with a short, swarthy Turk, whose head was wrapped in a long, brightly-coloured cloth, now deeply stained with coal-dust. For the rest, he wore a long pair of Turkish baggy breeches, and a shirt, wide-open at the neck, and with sleeves which hardly reached to his elbow. The man gaped at Dereck as he dropped to the iron-shod floor beside him, and looked at our hero as if he could not believe his eyes.

"Get on with the business," the middy told him, shortly. "See that your fire's right; and what steam have you got on her?"

The chances are that the unfortunate Turk knew

not a word of English, and in any case he did not understand what Dereck was saying. But the young fellow's appearance, his obviously British colouring, his sudden and uninvited presence in the stoke-hole, and his threatening attitude left not a doubt as to his intentions. Moreover, just then there came a sharp cry from the deck above, and Alphonse's voice speaking sternly yet quietly to the skipper. Add to that the shrill cries of Otto Scholz from the dim obscurity of the floating pier, now some fifty yards away, and there was abundant evidence to alarm this Turkish "greaser", and to show him that all was not as it should be. Instantly he started backwards and stretched out a hand to snatch at his firing-shovel. He gripped it in both hands and swung it upwards, with the evident intention of braining Dereck. And, no doubt, had the middy been a slow young gentleman, and given to taking time about making a decision, the contest between these two would have been ended within a minute. But Dereck, on this critical occasion, showed the stuff of which he was made almost more decidedly than he had done during the course of our story. Stepping back just half a pace, he suddenly struck out with his right fist, and, landing a blow under the chin of the Turk, tumbled him backward into the bunker.

"Now get in and fire the boilers," he told the fellow severely. "Yes, you can take your shovel, 'cos you can't do the job without it; but no tricks, mind you, no trying to swing round and brain me; if you do, look out for trouble."

It was trouble in the shape of a bullet that the

Turk was to beware of; and as Dereck spoke, the unfortunate fellow picked himself up slowly, and stood looking askance at the weapon which the sailor now presented at him. A nod of Dereck's head, a significant wave of one hand and a finger pointed to the furnace door, and at once, cowed and beaten by the swift action of the sailor, the man grasped his shovel and, opening the door of the furnace, commenced to throw fuel in.

"What steam's she got?" called Alphonse from the deck above.

"Seventy pounds to the inch," answered Dereck. "I've got the throttle quarter open; she'll take three-quarter throttle whenever you like. Give me a shout, and I'll set her going for you."

By then they were steaming away from the pier at a steady pace, while Alphonse, ignoring the cries of Otto Scholz, peered into the darkness and felt his way towards the exit from the harbour.

"Better go steadily," he was telling himself, "than plunge recklessly ahead and get stranded altogether. Ah! There goes a rifle, or was it Otto's revolver? Anyway, it don't matter much to me, because it's pitch-black out here, and whoever fires must do so without taking aim at all. So it'll be only a fluke shot that can hit us."

Yet there were other means at hand with which the enemy could detect the presence of the runaway and follow her movements; and before many minutes had passed, while shots were still ringing out in the darkness, and while Otto Scholz still continued to scream with rage from the floating pier, where the feeble

glimmer above it showed him dancing with anger and excitement, a sudden beam of light shot from the blackest depths of Maidos harbour. Flickering uncertainly to and fro for a while, and swamping the surface of the water to right and left with its dazzling rays, it finally jerked itself, as if by accident, on to the tiny steamer. Then it jerked to one side again, swung back spasmodically, and finally rested full on the vessel, showing the unhappy Turkish skipper seated before the wheel, and Alphonse steering his way for the "Narrows".

Ahead of the vessel, that gleaming light flooded the road which the fugitives wished to follow, and though it did them a disservice in having discovered and shown their position, yet it helped them vastly and accelerated their progress.

"You can give her steam," Alphonse called to the middy; "you can stick her at it as hard as you like, and send her on as fast as the boilers will take her."

It was weird to be rushing along through the water as if following a broad and solid highway, for the electric search-light cut a broad track right across the water, making it appear, in fact, as though it were a road cutting its way out from the harbour. And on either side of that broad, brilliant street there was pitch-black darkness, save for one tiny point of light, now far behind and to the left, where Otto Scholz still screamed and still screeched his anger.

Perhaps a minute later, another luminous eye broke the darkness at the back of Maidos harbour. Perhaps it was a search-light posted in one of the forts—those forts commanding the "Narrows", which had made

it necessary for the Allies to land their forces on Gallipoli. In any case a light very suddenly burst into being, and, having fluttered like a wounded bird about the harbour for a while, having as it were struggled with its sister light to cover the fugitives, it then switched off to the left and flooded that portion of the place where Otto Scholz was standing. It did more than that. It disclosed a long, narrow, low-built craft stealing rapidly towards the pier; while the light showed, as distinctly as in the day-time, the crescent blowing out from the short mast just for'ard of the funnel.

"Another patrol boat," Alphonse told himself, and called the news down to Dereck. "That means they'll pursue us, and the worst of the whole business is that the search-lights in the forts along the 'Narrows' will show us up all the time, and will allow the guns to blow us to pieces."

Dereck's head appeared above the combing of the engine hatchway, and the light flashing on his face showed that that young gentleman was smiling.

"Spot us all the way down, eh?" he laughed. "Of course they will, Alphonse, and that'll make our escape all the better. But we ain't in the 'Narrows' yet, are we? And it'll be time enough to grouse about the guns from the forts when they begin to get in at us. Ah! I see your old man's quietening down," he added, jerking his head at the Turkish skipper. "My fellow showed fight at first, and I had to down him; now he's working like a nigger, and as if he wanted to help us to get out of Maidos and right through to the British."

"Look over there!" Alphonse invited him, pointing to the left, where that long sleuth-hound of a vessel had now put in beside the pier, and was embarking Otto and his party. "That vessel looks fast, and so we shall have her to contend with as well as the fortress guns. That beast of an Otto is on board her; and if I know him at all he'll not rest, nor will he let anyone else rest, till we are captured. Get down there, Dereck, and make that Turk fire his boilers till they are on the point of bursting. We shall want every ounce of steam if we are to get out of this business."

There was no doubt that the predicament in which the two found themselves was hardly, if any, better than that in which they had been on the previous evening. Then darkness had sheltered them, while, thanks to Alphonse's sagacity and coolness, Dereck had been taken to the shelter of that dug-out. Now they were in the midst of enemies as before, but with this distinct and annoying difference—though there was darkness all around, yet those search-lights made their surroundings as bright as daylight; and how could they hope to escape under such conditions?

Yet who could say? Dereck and his chum had already gone through so much that they might yet master even this situation and find themselves once more back with their comrades. Perhaps it was natural, too, at this moment that, instead of worrying themselves overmuch about the danger with which they were confronted, they thought of those old friends of theirs; of the British ships steaming to and fro in the Ægean, of the *Queen Elizabeth* and her consorts casting those gigantic shells on the Turkish batteries

at the back of Achi Baba, and finally, of all those brave officers and men lining the trenches. Let us inform our readers here of what had been happening on the peninsula since Dereck's capture, and, in advance a little, of what was to happen in the future.

We have already explained that owing to the conformation of the Dardanelles, and to the extremely strong forts commanding it on either side, the power of the fleet to force its way to Constantinople was insufficient. For that long narrow strait of water gave every opportunity to the defenders, and pluck and seamanship were of no avail against their mines. It had become necessary, therefore, to land our forces on Gallipoli, and we have shown already how grandly that movement was carried out; how the French and our own brave men were already astraddle the toe of the peninsula, and how the Australians and New Zealanders had made a dash for the beach at Gaba Tepe and had seized the cliffs above, and, clinging to the spot in spite of most terrific assaults on the part of the Turks and Germans, had established their position there with a firmness there was no denying.

That impetuous assault which the enemy launched upon our trenches one night after those adventurous landings, and which was shattered and crumpled up by the fire of our infantry, aided by the shells of the fleet, was not the last of the fighting by any means. For as the days and weeks passed the British pressed slowly forward, encroaching more and more upon the lines of the enemy, and endeavouring to envelop the village of Krithia, and so seize upon the heights of Achi Baba. We may say truthfully enough that

during these long weeks the British soldier discovered the Turkish infantryman to be a gentleman when compared with his German ally, and discovered him moreover to be a very valiant enemy. Hard knocks were given and received, and still, in spite of terrific efforts on our part, Achi Baba seemed as far off as ever, and the success of this expedition to the Dardanelles seemed to quiver in the balance. Indeed, as we write, the passage of the "Narrows" has not yet been forced; though the troops on shore have made good progress, while another landing has taken place at Suvla Bay, a surprise landing on this occasion, which met with no resistance. Indeed, the wily Turk, and his still wilier ally, the German, were hoodwinked nicely by the British. Demonstrations of our fleet off the Asiatic coast made them imagine that a landing was imminent in that direction, for it was known to them through their secret-service agents that heavy reinforcements of Kitchener's Army had been sent to the Dardanelles. But, as we have said, the real intention was to land at Suvla Bay; and in the course of some twenty-four hours a host of men was poured on shore, together with ammunition, guns, and supplies in plenty.

Suvla Bay lies to the north-west of Gaba Tepe. There is a salt lake there, which, however, in the summer season is dry and passable. From this point, an advance towards the south and east threatened at once the communications of the Turks; and as a matter of fact our men, pushing forward before the enemy could recover from their surprise, and rush up troops in sufficient numbers to oppose them, had ad-

vanced some three miles or more, when at length the enemy was arraigned against them, and had reached a spot from which their gun-fire almost surrounded the Turks in and around Maidos and Achi Baba.

In the meanwhile the fleet had been by no means idle. It is true that the arrival on the scene of certain German submarines had scattered the mine-sweepers and transports and battleships which hitherto had lain off Gallipoli, and had sent them into safe harbours. It is unfortunately true, also, that the German under-water craft contrived to sink two of our ships, as well as a laden transport. But against this we are able to show the most courageous and most active efforts upon the part of our own submarine commanders. Those "Narrows", barred by their chains of floating mines, could not keep out our under-water craft. First, one gallant commander of a submarine made the adventurous journey through the "Narrows" into the Sea of Marmora, then others followed; and as a result Turkish battleships, transports, gunboats, and ammunition ships were sent to the bottom, while so great was the terror created in Constantinople by the appearance of our submarines that passage across the water ceased almost altogether.

Thus, at the time of writing, we have come to a stage when the enemy on shore—that is to say, on Gallipoli—is almost surrounded; while at sea, in the "Narrows" and in the Sea of Marmora, our submarines cut off his communications, his reinforcements, his munitions, and those provisions which are absolutely essential for the well-being of an army.

It may be that within a short space of time the "Narrows" will be ours, and we shall join hands with our Russian Allies in the Black Sea. Then, indeed, will the object of the Dardanelles expedition have been fully accomplished. On the other hand, the terribly difficult country which so aids the Turkish defence may check our advance for a considerable period. Yet Britain was never more determined, for if she forces the Dardanelles she and her Allies can then pour guns and ammunition and equipment into Russia, with which to equip the millions of men eagerly waiting for a call from their Tsar. This war, after all, is one of numbers. In the end numbers must, and will tell, provided those numbers are equipped for fighting. Thus, with the Dardanelles opened, we shall have added to the forces of the Allies, by means of the munitions we can pass into the Tsar's domains, a vast swarm of men who live only to throw the German invader out of their country.

We left Dereck and Alphonse steaming out of the harbour of Maidos at a speed which set the water at the prow of their tiny vessel frothing upward, and left behind them a wake of snow-white froth which glistened and sparkled in the rays of that brilliant search-light. Dereck clambered up the iron rungs of the engine-room ladder till once more his head and shoulders were above the combing, and, turning his face towards the distant search-light, shook his fist angrily.

"I'd like to smash in the face of the thing," he shouted at Alphonse, for the clatter of the machinery down below almost deafened him. "Where's that

other fellow, that Otto Scholz? And what sort of a pace is he making?"

For answer, Alphonse turned and pointed away to his left and behind, where, under a stream of dazzling light, that sleuth-hound could be seen shooting towards them. Whatever the vessel was which the German spy had contrived to become possessed of, it was indeed a fast one. It came steaming away from the pier out into the open harbour, careened to one side as the helm was put hard over. Circling round, it then pointed a course for the patrol boat making away from it, and as Alphonse and his comrade watched it, it became evident that the vessel was steadily, nay, swiftly, lessening the distance between them.

"And will be alongside in an hour at least," Dereck shouted. "By then, of course, we shall be out in the 'Narrows', and every search-light will be on us, as you've said already, Alphonse. We shall be shot to pieces, right enough, and that means that we must change our plans instantly. Dodge her about, man; send her off to the right, and then slick across to the left again. We may miss their search-lights in that way, and make a course into the Sea of Marmora. As the morning comes we might discover a little creek which would hide us, and to-morrow night we could slip down the 'Narrows'. How's that?"

"Just 'it'," Alphonse called back merrily. "You get down below, young 'un, and see that she's got heaps of steam, while I try to play a wily game on the Turk and that beast Otto."

By now, what with the efforts of the Turkish "greaser", who seemed, indeed, to take a delight in

feeding his furnace, and what with the careful handling of the middy—for, after all, there is such a thing as skill in driving an engine—the pressure dial secured to the boiler of this tiny dispatch boat in which they were escaping had its needle pointing to the maximum mark on the index. Steam was blowing from the escape half-way up the squat funnel, while the funnel itself glowed a dull red in spite of the light playing all about it. Sparks were flying from the top of it, and flames were whisked away by the breeze.

Pushing his head into the hatch again, Dereck stared upwards, and then, calling to the "greaser", drew his attention to these tell-tale sparks and flames flaring from the funnel.

"She's got enough steam almost to bust her," he told the man. "Just you open that furnace door again and damp your fuel, then stoke her for all you're worth. That'll check the sparks and flames for a while, and will help us to dodge those beggars."

He explained his meaning by the use of gestures, and once again it seemed that the man understood what was required of him, for taking a length of hose which trailed across the iron flooring of the stock-hole, he turned a tap and shot a stream of water over the coal in the bunker; then, pulling a lever which shut a damper, he tossed fuel on to the flaming coals in the furnace. Almost at once dense black clouds of smoke came billowing and blowing away from the top of the funnel, while the sparks and flames ceased.

And it was just at this precise moment that Alphonse suddenly swung his helm over, causing the little boat to rock to one side and ship some water. So sudden

and unexpected was the move that in a flash they were outside that streak of brilliant light which illuminated the water, and, plunging onward, were lost in darkness. Then Alphonse swung the helm back again, and just as the operator ashore jerked his lamp round, and in doing so cast the beam of light upward and away from the surface of the water, he swung the tiller still again, and sent the boat across in the opposite direction; indeed, they swung right under the beam of light, escaping its rays by a miracle, and then, at a touch of the tiller, turned on the direct path for the opening of the harbour and dodged their way onward, Alphonse taking care all the while to avoid the second beam of light which illuminated the boat on which Otto Scholz was following.

Meanwhile the operator in charge of the search-light had been frantically flinging his beam in all directions, though never quite upon the spot where Dereck and Alphonse were steering. Every other portion of the harbour seemed to come under that beam, which appeared to have gone mad as it turned hither and thither. Then of a sudden it rested on a mass of rock on the left of the harbour.

"That's kind of it," Alphonse told himself; "that's the point which practically marks the exit from the harbour and the commencement of the 'Narrows'. I'll shoot her round it and see if that won't give us cover."

Over went his helm again, while the disappointed operator jerked his beam upwards to the sky, and then with a sharper jerk downwards to the other side of the harbour. The little boat swerved once more

and rolled heavily, and then, answering her helm, she shot across to that point of rock and rounded it, coming into even denser darkness.

"What's up?" demanded Dereck, thrusting his head above the level of the deck. "Good for you, Alphonse, for you seem to have thrown them off altogether. Now, what do we do? I vote for pushing on into the Sea of Marmora and waiting for daylight. As the dawn comes we'll creep into some little hollow and lie up during the day. Of course if we are discovered we shall have to run for it."

Reducing their speed at once, and shaping a course which they judged would keep them clear of either shore and take them into the sea for which they were making, they pushed on steadily for a couple of hours or more, and then reduced speed again till they were hardly moving. Indeed, they had just sufficient way on the vessel to keep her from being floated backward into the "Narrows" by the strong current which passes from the Black Sea outward.

Then the darkness slowly lifted, and as the dawn began to break, though still a dense haze hung over the water, they ate a hasty meal, in which the Turkish skipper and his "greaser" joined them. By then it was light enough to see some three hundred yards, and at once Dereck opened his throttle, while Alphonse steered his vessel towards the left, hoping to strike the shore in that direction. But some five minutes later he gave vent to a shout of astonishment.

"It's no game," he cried to the middy. "Look over there; that's the vessel that that beast Otto boarded last night, and he must have guessed at our course

and followed us. Give her steam, for he is after us."

A rifle spoke in the distance as Dereck stared angrily towards the dispatch boat on which Otto Scholz was following, while a bullet struck the funnel and perforated it. Then as their vessel gathered way and rushed on into the Sea of Marmora other shots followed, the bullets hissing above Alphonse's head.

Half an hour made a serious difference to the situation, for by that time the pursuer had gained considerably, while the figures now crowding her deck, and obviously bearing rifles, showed that there was but a poor chance for those who were fleeing. Yet Dereck and the Frenchman were the last to give up easily. They pushed their craft on in spite of bullets, and under such a pressure of steam that the deck trembled, while the funnel threatened to burn away, so hot was it. But the enemy came ever closer, and in a little while was almost abreast of them.

"Halt! Bring your vessel to or we will sink you," shouted the German across at them.

It looked, indeed, as if there was nothing left but for the middy and his friend to obey that command, and to become prisoners of the traitor; yet, in real life as in romance, it is often enough the most unexpected thing that happens. And here, at this very moment, there happened a thing which left Otto breathless, and which caused Alphonse and Dereck to shout at their loudest.

For of a sudden there came a swirl some distance from the little patrol vessel as the middy shut his throttle and brought her to a standstill. A steel rod appeared in the water and burst its way upwards.

Then a conning tower was seen, and in a moment a submarine lay afloat within easy reach of them. As if in a dream Dereck saw a man-hole open, and then there swarmed upon the conning tower and on to the deck of the submarine a number of figures.

"British!" he yelled at the top of his voice. "Alphonse, my boy, the British Navy!"

It was at this moment that a tall young officer aboard the under-water vessel hailed them loudly.

"Ahoy!" he called, "who's that?" and then peered hard at Dereck. "Why, if it ain't Dereck Smallweed! Come aboard, my boy, and bring your comrades."

He swung round a second later, and addressed a peremptory command to Otto Scholz through his megaphone. "Drop those rifles," he called, "and see that you don't dare to move from your present position. Now you'll all come aboard, and can explain yourselves when we get down into the Ægean."

It was in that way, aboard one of the units of his own beloved navy, that Dereck Smallweed returned once more to his cousins. And then, having refreshed himself and obtained new raiment, he once more addressed himself to the fighting in Gallipoli, along with those gallant soldiers whose heroic deeds form an unsurpassable record of bravery—a record that the peoples of our Empire may well look back upon with pride.

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